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THE

WORKS

Of the late RIGHT HONORABLE

HENRY ST. JOHN,

LORD VISCOUNT BOLINGBROKE.

VOL. V.

LONDON:

Printed in the Year MDCCLXXVII.

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FRAGMENTS or MINUTES

OF

ESSAYS.

ADVERTISEMENT.

THE foregoing Eſſays, if they may deſerve even that name, and the Fragments or Minutes that follow, were thrown upon paper in Mr. Pope's life-time, and at his deſire. They were all communicated to him in ſcraps, as they were occaſionally writ. But the latter not having been connected and put together under different heads, and in the ſame order as the former had been, before his death, if that may be called order; I have contented myſelf to correct and extend them a little, and to leave them as Fragments, or Minutes, in the form in which they appear, tho' they might be ſtyled Eſſays with no more impropriety than thoſe which precede them. They are all nothing more than repetitions of converſations often interrupted, often renewed, and often carried on a little confuſedly. The opinions I held are expoſed as clearly, as they ought to be by a man who thinks his opinions founded in truth. I thought, and I think ſtill, that mine were ſo. The more important, therefore, the ſubjects are, the more neceſſary it ſeemed to me not to diſguiſe the truth, eſpecially to friends not eaſy to be ſcandalized, even when their own opinions and prejudices were frequently contradicted, and on occaſions when freedom of ſpeech could be neither indecent nor hurtful. It could be neither indecent nor hurtful to theſe friends; nor will it be ſo, I hope, to thoſe into whoſe hands theſe papers may fall after my death.

FRAGMENTS or MINUTES

OF

ESSAYS.

I.

I Have read again Dr. CUDWORTH's poſthumous treatiſe concerning eternal and immutable morality, which you ſent me long ago: and, ſince you aſk my opinion of it now, I ſhall take ſome notice of thoſe, which this very learned author defends on two ſubjects, the nature of human knowledge, and the principles of natural religion. On the firſt I have writ to you already, and on the laſt you know that I intend to write to you. On both of theſe I differ widely from the doctor, and am very far from finding any thing in this treatiſe, which can induce me, in the leaſt degree, to change my way of thinking. On the contrary, the great principle on which he proceeds ſeems to me of the utmoſt abſurdity, and the conſequences deducible from it at leaſt as dangerous, perhaps

more ſo, to the foundation of all religion, than the conſequences that flow from the doctrines he oppoſes.

Cudworth enters into the diſpute between Des Cartes and his oppoſers, who have triumphed exceedingly over him for ſaying, " I do not think that the eſſences of things, and " thoſe mathematical truths which can be known of them, " are independent on God; but I think, however, that they " are immutable and eternal, becauſe God willed and ordered " that they ſhould be ſo." It is more probable, and it is more candid to believe, that this philoſopher was in earneſt, than that he was in jeſt, when he advanced this propoſition. He might think that he took the beſt, if not the ſtrongeſt ſide in diſpute, and approve his own intention in the choice he made; as it deſerves to be approved by every ſincere theiſt, and modeſt enquirer into matters of the firſt philoſophy, even by thoſe who are not of his mind.

If Des Cartes was to ariſe, and to anſwer for himſelf, might he not diſtinguiſh between immutable and independent? Might he not ſay, that theſe truths are immutable, becauſe they affirm what is conformable to that univerſal nature whereof God is the author, as he is of that intelligence by which they are perceived; and that they are therefore, in a proper ſenſe, both immutable and dependent? immutable, as much as the nature is to which they belong; dependent, on that Being by whoſe energy this nature began to exiſt, and is preſerved. He might own himſelf afraid to aſſert, notwithſtanding the deciſions of ſchoolmen, or the decrees of councils, that there can be any entity whatever, or any thing in any being whatever, which is independent on God. He might lament his own fate, to be accuſed of atheiſm, becauſe he employed, in phyſical hypotheſes, matter and motion alone; tho' he always ſuppoſed a firſt

firſt mover, and had proved, by a demonſtration he thought good, the exiſtence of an all-perfect Being: and to be thus accuſed by men, who preſume to maintain that they have other objects of knowledge, beſides the exiſtence of an all-perfect Being, which exiſt by the neceſſity of their own natures, and independently on him. He would reject moſt certainly, with ſome of that ſourneſs which he had in his temper as well as in his countenace, the imputation of betaking himſelf to a pitiful evaſion. He would ſhew, with great force, that his apprehenſion of admitting any thing independent on GOD into the corporeal or intellectual ſyſtem, is a moſt reaſonable apprehenſion, and no bugbear, as the doctor calls it. He might ſhew, perhaps, the prophane conſequences of ſuch metaphyſics as the doctor's, by citing, among others, this aſſertion from the treatiſe we ſpeak of here; "the eternal and immutable "wiſdom in the mind of GOD is thence participated by created "beings independent upon the will of GOD." He might inſiſt, that, ſince "the wiſdom of GOD is as much GOD as the will "of GOD," and the will, by conſequence, as the wiſdom, it is abſurd to diſtinguiſh them; and that it is ſomething worſe than abſurd to reaſon about the divine, as we reaſon about the human intellect, to divide and parcel out the former on the plan of the latter. If the will of man is blind, dark, plumbean, flexible, and liable to be ſeduced, is the will of GOD to be conceived in the like manner? And if it is not, why are we led to conclude that a ſuperior faculty is neceſſary to determine it, as the judgment of reaſon does, or ſhould determine that of man? The antients thought matter eternal, and aſſumed that the Demiurgus, or divine architect, compoſed the frame of the world with materials which were ready prepared, and independently on him in a confuſed chaos. Much in the ſame manner, ſuch metaphyſicians as the learned CUDWORTH have imagined a ſort of intellectual chaos, a chaos of eternal ideas, of incorporeal eſſences,

eſſences, independent on God, ſelf-exiſtent, and therefore coæval with the Supreme Being, and therefore anterior to all other natures. In this intellectual chaos, God ſees, and man muſt endeavor to ſee, the natures, the real eſſences of things: and thus the foundations of morality are laid higher than the exiſtence of any moral agents, before there was any ſyſtem of being, from which the obligations to it could reſult, or to which they could be applied: juſt as the ſame philoſophers ſuppoſe the incorporeal eſſences of white and black, for inſtance, to have exiſted when there was no ſuch thing as color, and thoſe of a ſquare and circle, when there was neither form nor figure.

Des Cartes would have broke off the diſpute by acknowledging, what he had acknowledged before, that "all theſe "things are unintelligible to us," and that by conſequence all diſpute about them is impertinent. I ſhould have gone away confirmed in my opinion that there is nothing, in any kind of being, which does not depend on the ſupreme, immenſe, all-perfect Being, nor any nature which does not depend on the Author of all nature; tho' I felt, at the ſame time, the difficulty of maintaining this opinion by argument. Mr. Locke obſerves how impoſſible it is for us to conceive certain relations, habitudes, and connections, viſibly included in ſome of our ideas, to be ſeparable from them even by infinite power. Let us obſerve, on this occaſion, how impoſſible, or at leaſt how extremely difficult it is for us to ſeparate the idea of eternity from certain mathematical and moral truths, as well as from ſuch as are called neceſſary, and are ſelf-evident, on one hand: and, on the other, how impoſſible it is to conceive that truths ſhould exiſt before the things to which they are relative; or particular natures and eſſences, before the ſyſtem of univerſal nature, and when there was no being but the ſuper-eſſential Being.

God

God knew, from all eternity, every ſyſtem corporeal and intellectual that he created, in time. He knew by conſequence, for he ordered, the various manners in which all the parts of theſe ſyſtems, and the ſyſtems themſelves ſhould operate on one another, the relations they ſhould have, the proportions they ſhould bear, the ideas they ſhould communicate to creatures fitted to receive them, and capable of knowing only by them. All this he foreknew; but all this did not therefore exiſt: ſuch an exiſtence was at moſt eventual, and depended on the will, not the knowledge of God; if we may diſtinguiſh them, to be a little more intelligible. Theſe immaterial forms and eſſences, if any ſuch there were, and theſe immutable truths, for ſuch there are moſt certainly, could not begin to exiſt in any proper ſenſe till thoſe ſyſtems of nature, to which the former are ſaid to belong, and from which the latter do manifeſtly reſult, were called into actuality: and, in ſhort, I cannot perſuade myſelf that Des Cartes aſſerted without good reaſon, tho' he has been much cenſured for aſſerting it, that God is the author of the eſſence, as well as of the exiſtence of all that he created *.

* What I have been led to ſay on this occaſion makes it neceſſary to explain myſelf a little more fully; for tho' I dare not aſſert, like metaphyſical divines of your and my communion, that the eſſences of things are in a ſtrict and proper ſenſe independent on God, any more than their exiſtence; nor am able to conceive a dependency of exiſtences or beings, and an independency of eſſences or manners of being; yet am I far from aſſenting to Des Cartes in all he has advanced on this ſubject and on matters relative to it. He has puſhed hypotheſis and even truth itſelf into chimera. There is a ſort of knight-errantry in philoſophy as well as in arms. The end propoſed by both is laudable; for nothing can be ſo more than to redreſs wrongs and to correct errors. But when imagination is let looſe, and the brain is overheated, wrongs may be redreſſed by new wrongs, errors may be corrected by new errors. The cauſe of innocence may be ill defended by heroes of one ſort, and that of truth by heroes of another. Such was Don Quixotte, ſuch was Des Cartes; and the imaginary character of one, and the real character of the other, gave occaſion to the two moſt ingenious ſatirical romances that were ever writ.

If

If what has been ſaid ſhould be called hypothetical, it muſt be allowed to be leſs ſo, and, at the ſame time, to convey to

In one of theſe, a Chineſe Mandarin meets ſome diſciples of this philoſopher as they travelled through the moon to thoſe imaginary ſpaces, to that third heaven, where his thinking ſubſtance was employed in building a new world, or the model of a world, on his own principles of matter and motion, whilſt his extended ſubſtance lay buried at Stockholm, or at Paris. The Mandarin had contracted acquaintance with father Mersenne in a former journey, had read the metaphyſical meditations, was inſtructed in this part at leaſt of the Carteſian philoſophy, and the judgment he made of it I own to be mine. It contains opinions that ſeem to my apprehenſion moſt evidently falſe, and paralogiſms ſo much oftener than demonſtrations, that, when I am of the ſame mind, I am ſo, frequently, for reaſons different from his, and even contrary to them. Thus, for inſtance, I take it to be evidently falſe that we have certainty of knowledge whenever we have clear and diſtinct ideas of any thing. Our ideas are often clear and diſtinct, and at the ſame time fantaſtical. Examples may be brought of ſuch as we receive immediately and paſſively from outward objects, and of ſuch as the mind frames by it's own activity; for that which Gassendi acknowledges of himſelf, in his objections to the third meditation of Des Cartes, muſt have been alike true of others. Many things had ſeemed to him ſo clear and diſtinct that he held them for undoubted geometrical truths, which he was obliged afterwards, and on a further examination, to reject. To what purpoſe now is it ſaid that an attribute which we perceive to be contained in the idea of any thing, may be affirmed of that thing with truth? Such an attribute may be affirmed with metaphyſical truth of the moſt fantaſtical idea. But the difference between metaphyſical and real truth is great, and tho' we have the former on our ſide in affirming the attribute, yet the whole muſt be chimerical if the idea be ſo, and ſuch a proceſs of reaſoning may confirm us in fantaſtical, it cannot lead us to real knowledge.

This happened to the author of theſe maxims, the firſt of which is falſe, and the ſecond precarious and uncertain, when he attempted to demonſtrate the exiſtence of God. I do not believe that he meaned to weaken this great truth by employing a ſophiſm to prove it; but I believe that the affectation of novelty led him into a paralogiſm, or an undeſigned ſophiſm. He aſſumed that he had in his mind a clear and diſtinct idea of an infinite all-perfect being; that this idea has an objective reality, or, in plainer terms, a real object, which may be known by the idea alone, and without any further proofs; and that neceſſary exiſtence is contained, as indeed it is, in this idea. From all this he concluded that an infinite all-perfect being exiſts, and is the cauſe of this idea which repreſents himſelf.

Now that ſuch a being exiſts, and that he can want no perfection conceivable or inconceivable by us, may be, and has been demonſtrated invincibly. But to ſay

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the mind ideas and notions much more intelligible, than all that metaphyſical jargon which Dr. CUDWORTH employs,

that he can become the object of a clear and diſtinct idea, is to advance a groundleſs paradox. We may know very certainly that there is a figure which has a thouſand ſides, but no man will ſay, I think, that his mind repreſents theſe thouſand ſides to him in one clear and diſtinct idea, nor that he has any other than a general and confuſed notion of this figure. Much leſs will any man, who is not a ſworn Carteſian, pretend that he perceives in his mind a clear and diſtinct idea of the infinite all-perfect being. He knows in general that there is ſuch a Being, and that to ſuppoſe there is not, implies contradiction, or rather many contradictions. He has particular ideas and notions of ſome of the divine perfections, well determined as far as they extend, and yet inadequate. There are others which he cannot ſo determine, and he knows that there are many of which he can have no conception at all: for I do not agree with the Chineſe philoſopher, nor with the Jeſuit who makes him ſpeak, that there are any which ſeem incompatible to him, unleſs it be when he determines all the ideas he has, or when he pretends to have ideas he cannot have; and that we are apt to do ſo often, the very examples which are brought to ſhew an incompatibility in the divine perfections, are ſufficient to ſhew.

To believe that there is a GOD, we muſt be taught this great principle of all religion, and receive it on authority. To know that there is one, we muſt go through a proceſs of reaſoning that connects certain evident truths intuitively together, and ſo arrives at demonſtration. Tho' the atheiſt does not connect them into a demonſtration of GOD's exiſtence, yet he knows them all to be truths as well as the theiſt. He knows that they reſult from the nature of things. He pronounces them therefore immutable and eternal, as he conceives that nature to be; and can take no ſide in the queſtion, whether they are dependent or independent on GOD, ſince he acknowledges no GOD. The theiſt makes a better uſe of theſe truths; for he connects them into a demonſtration of GOD's exiſtence, and inſtead of acknowledging the truth of no propoſition, like DES CARTES, till he diſcovers the truth of this, he finds by experience that he could not have diſcovered the truth of this, if he had not antecedently known and acknowledged the truth of many others. He owns ſeveral neceſſary truths not written nor imprinted on his mind, but ſuch as he has framed by obſerving the agreement and diſagreement of his ideas, and ſuch as he concludes every other man who has the ſame faculties, and the ſame perceptions in his mind, muſt neceſſarily frame. He calls theſe truths eternal and immutable relatively to that ſyſtem of nature from which they reſult. But he cannot call them independent as properly and as conſiſtently as the atheiſt may, ſince he acknowledges a firſt cauſe, an author of this and every other ſyſtem of nature.

ARISTOTLE, who acts a part as well as the Chineſe Mandarin in the ſcenes of the romance I quote, when he comes to examine thoſe aſſertions of DES CARTES, "That the eſſences of things, and the truths called neceſſary, are dependent on "GOD, and that they are immutable and eternal in no other ſenſe than this, "that GOD willed they ſhould be ſo," ſuppoſes that the French philoſopher

after his Grecian maſters. Is it any thing better than jargon, to tell us, that our ideas of white, or black, which we receive

could mean to ſpeak of no eſſences except thoſe of created beings, nor of any propoſitions except ſuch as are advanced concerning them. That this was his meaning no doubt can be made, and he explained it ſufficiently, when he ſaid, "God is the author of the eſſence, as well as of the exiſtence of his creatures." But even with this meaning, the Stagyrite, or rather the Jeſuit, is not contented. Des Cartes ſhould have reflected, he ſays, that truths which regard the eſſence of created beings, have a neceſſary connection with thoſe which regard the eſſence of God. He brings an example. "That the creature is eſſentially dependent "on God," is, he ſays, a propoſition which belongs to the eſſence of the creature. "That God is the abſolute maſter and the free cauſe of all beings," is a propoſition which belongs to the eſſence of the Creator; and yet, that if one of theſe could be falſe, the other might be ſo too. Now ſurely the want of reflection was, in this caſe, on the ſide of Aristotle himſelf. "If one of "theſe propoſitions could be falſe, the other might be ſo too." Agreed, but not for the reaſon he gives, a ſuppoſed neceſſary and general connection between truths that regard the eſſences of created beings, and truths that regard the eſſence of the divine uncreated being. The reaſon is, that theſe propoſitions are in truth identical, that the firſt belongs to the eſſence of God as really as the laſt, and that to ſay the creature is dependent on the Creator, or the Creator is abſolute maſter of the creature, is to affirm the ſame thing. Their eſſences are infinitely diſtant, but they are connected by this relation, and all other connection of them is purely imaginary.

We know the relation of the Creator to his creatures, and of the creatures to their Creator. But to talk of a neceſſary connection between truths that belong to the eſſence of one and the eſſences of the other, ſeems to be little elſe than metaphyſical nonſenſe, and the language of men who ſeek to evade what they cannot explain. When God made the animal world, he made ſubſtances whoſe eſſences are unknown to us. Even our own is ſo. What now is the neceſſary connection between the incomprehenſible eſſence of the ſupreme, ſelf-exiſtent, all-perfect being, and thoſe of created ſubſtances which he has not given us the means of knowing, or between truths that belong to either? When God created finite extenſion he created all the poſſible modes of it, and among the reſt, that of a ſpace included within three lines, which we have obſerved, and have called a triangle. By contemplating this figure, we diſcover the various properties of it, and are able to demonſtrate ſeveral truths concerning them, as the equality, for inſtance, of theſe three angles to two right angles. What now is the neceſſary connection between finite extenſion in the ſeveral eſſential modes of it, and an infinite but ſimple unextended ſpiritual ſubſtance, ſuch as we conceive that of God to be in his ineffable manner of being? What is the neceſſary connection between true and falſe propoſitions relative to one, or the other?

from

from outward objects; our ideas of a ſquare, or a circle, which we acquire by the help of our ſenſes likewiſe; or our ideas of

On the whole, we may conclude in favor of Des Cartes, that he imagined no ſuch abſurd connection, and thought himſelf therefore at liberty to aſſume what he did aſſume, concerning the dependency of created eſſences, as well as exiſtences on God, who is, according to him, the efficient cauſe of the truth of all true propoſitions about them. Truths relating to God always have been, and always muſt be the ſame. They are abſolutely from all eternity, and to all eternity independent on his will, for he is what he is, by the neceſſity of his nature, and ſelf-exiſtence is part of his eſſence. But nothing of this kind is applicable to the creatures. They might have been, or not have been, and the ſuppoſition of their non-exiſtence implies no contradiction. It is true, indeed, that whilſt they exiſt, they are what God made them to be, and omnipotence that can deſtroy them, cannot alter their eſſences. Theſe eſſences, however, and the truths concerning them, are not ſo abſolutely independent on God, as the adverſaries of Des Cartes pronounce them to be; for even in the hypotheſis, that God had no other ſhare, nor exerted any other power in the great work of the creation, than that of calling eſſences he could not create into exiſtence, by creating the things to which they belong; theſe eſſences are ſtill indirectly, if not directly dependent on him, and he is doubly the cauſe of thoſe truths which we affirm concerning them, as he called the eſſences into exiſtence, and as he created beings capable of perceiving them.

This diſtinction between exiſtences and eſſences, the former of which, that are dependent on the will of God, drew the latter, that are independent on his will, along with them, into the ſyſtem of things that are, is not very clear. Might not the obſcurity be taken away by taking away this diſtinction, and by underſtanding eſſences to be nothing more than manners of being determined by the power that gives the being, and manners of conceiving determined by the power that forms the conceptions? When God made limited extenſion, he made it capable of receiving various modifications, and of producing various appearances. Theſe we diſtinguiſh by names for our own uſe. We call them circles for inſtance, or ſquares, or triangles, (I ſpeak not here of ſubſtances, for with their real eſſences, it is not pretended that we have any thing to do) and when we have given them theſe names, philoſophers aſſume that they are real eſſences, independent on God, tho' he is the author of all extenſion, and gave us faculties to perceive theſe forms of it.

It would be tedious, and needleſs to ſpeak of the doctrine of the ſchools concerning eſſences. I ſhall content myſelf to make one obſervation more on this head. The combinations of ideas which are diſtinguiſhed by the term of mixed modes, and are principally of the moral kind, have no bad title to be eſteemed eſſences. We compound them, we can therefore decompound them, and the real conſtitution of every ſpecies of them, cannot be unknown to us. They are

juſt and unjuſt, which we frame on experience, are incorporeal ſubſtances, eternal eſſences, and independent natures, things ingenerable, and unperiſhable, according to PLATO and ARISTOTLE, and which the former, as TULLY expreſſes his ſenſe, "negat "gigni, ſed ſemper eſſe, et ratione et intelligentiâ contineri?" Is it any thing better than jargon, to tell us that "theſe ſub-"ſtances, eſſences, natures, are the primary objects of ſcience, "and the ſame too with the intellect that knows them; that "they are uniform modifications of the human, and of the "divine mind, and that altho' the former be created, yet the

not, however, eſſences like thoſe which ſeveral philoſophers have imagined, from PLATO down to CUDWORTH, and others infected by the ſame metaphyſics. They are not ingenerable, nor immutable, nor unperiſhable in a proper ſenſe, for if they were ſo, theſe effects would be more perfect than their cauſe, ſince the human mind is their cauſe, and in ſome ſort their creator, and ſince the human mind is none of theſe. They are not independent neither on the will of GOD. They are abſtract complex notions. Such Mr. LOCKE gives us leave to call them, "as by a peculiar right appertaining to the underſtanding *." The mind makes them arbitrarily and occaſionally, by virtue of a power to conceive things in this manner, which GOD has beſtowed, and directed to the improvement of general knowledge. There they fluctuate: they are not the ſame eſſences in every mind, nor always in the ſame mind; and if they anſwer their purpoſe in any degree, that degree is proportionable to the mental power of conceiving things in this manner which GOD has given us. Thus even the truths we call neceſſary, the eternæ veritates of which we boaſt, are one way or other dependent on the Supreme Being. Their neceſſity is not antecedent, but conſequential to the exiſtence of material and intellectual created natures. Their neceſſity ariſes from a conformity to theſe natures, which we are made able to diſcern intuitively in certain caſes.

BUT it is time to conclude a note too long perhaps already, tho' I have hurried through it, and touched the matter of it more lightly than I could have done. I do not pretend to decide the queſtion between DES CARTES and his adverſaries. All I would inculcate is this, that ſince his opinion may receive a reaſonable interpretation, it ſhould not be condemned as abſolutely, and as dogmatically as it has been; and that it becomes a theiſt to incline always to the ſide which aſcribes the greateſt poſſible power to GOD, from that which has even the appearance of limiting it by aſſuming an independency, when a dependency on him implies no contradiction.

* Lib. iii. c. 5.

"know-

" knowledge it has is a participation of that one eternal, im-
" mutable, and uncreated wiſdom ?" In ſhort, is it any thing better than jargon, to talk of " ectypal prints, and deri-
" vative ſignatures from one architypal intellect or ſeal, like
" ſo many multiplied reflections of one and the ſame face made
" in ſeveral glaſſes?"

According to ſuch philoſophy as this, we may, and we muſt pierce into the myſtery of God's nature, and into the depths of his wiſdom, to arrive at a knowledge of his will relatively to man. We muſt found the principles of morality, not on our knowledge of what our Creator has done, but on our knowledge of what he knows. We muſt not conſult his will as it is ſignified by the conſtitution of the ſyſtem wherein he has placed us, but we muſt abſtract ourſelves from this, and deduce our moral obligations from an eternal reaſon, from the immutable and independent natures of things. We muſt contemplate the ſame architypes according to which our ſyſtem of being was made, to know how we are to conduct ourſelves in it: and thus the ſame rule becomes common to God and man. Our knowledge is no longer human, it is divine. It is no longer derived from outward impreſſions, and inward operations; our ideas have no longer their diſtinct architypes exiſting out of the mind, or formed in it; they are all the impreſſions of an architypal ſeal, that is, of the divine intellect. A ſtrange method, ſurely, of proving our ideas, if not the knowledge we acquire by them, to be independent on God.

I cannot ſoar ſo high as Plato and Cudworth. I will not ſink ſo low as Protagoras, and other antients; as Hobbes, and other moderns. The former amaze, inſtead of inſtructing me; and if I underſtand the latter, I only underſtand them, to know that they impoſe on themſelves, and would impoſe

poſe on me, the groſſeſt abſurdities. Strange extremes! When CUDWORTH holds up the metaphyſical glaſs to my eye, I ſee ſomething, I know not what; ſomething that glitters at an immeaſurable diſtance from me. When HOBBES holds it up, he changes the poſition: and I ſee ſomething monſtrous at the very end of the glaſs.

As whimſical, and as little intelligible as the doctrines of the former are, they may lead men to think, that the will of GOD, ſignified by his works, not being the ſole true criterion of moral good and evil; and ſince there is another criterion antecedent to this, nay, even the criterion of it, that is, the eternal reaſon of immutable independent natures; they ought to have an entire regard to theſe, and none to the will of GOD ſignified by his works: becauſe in them he has done little elſe than clothe theſe eternal uncreated eſſences with a garment of exiſtence, "ſartoris inſtar rerum eſſentias veſtire exiſtentiâ." CUDWORTH declares againſt this abſurd conceit, which ARISTOTLE too chaſtiſes. But then what did the good man, and all thoſe who have held the ſame opinions, mean? To anſwer truly, they thought, as men deep in imaginary ſcience are apt to do, that they had much meaning when they had really none.

AFTER ſounding loudly in our ears, and repeating dogmatically, that things are what they are by their natures, eternal, immutable, and independent on the will of GOD, they are driven to diſtinguiſh, that they may avoid all miſtakes, as they pretend, and to aſſert, not what their words import, but ſomething which their words do not import, nor can be ſaid to import any where out of the ſchools. When they talk of natures by which things are what they are, they do not mean, it ſeems, as any vulgar man would have thought, the conſtituent eſſences

of

of things, the real natures by which alone things can be what they are. They mean ſomething which is not a nature nor eſſence, but ſomething which ſchoolmen and philoſophers have been pleaſed to call ſo. When they ſay, that things are white by whiteneſs, triangular by triangularity, or juſt by juſtice, and that omnipotence itſelf cannot make them white, triangular, nor juſt, without ſuch certain natures; a man who is no metaphyſician, nor logician, muſt be induced to think their meaning to be, that GOD makes things, dependent on him, to exiſt conformably to natures independent on him. If they were not thought to have ſome ſuch meaning, they could be underſtood to mean nothing more than this, that things are white, triangular, and juſt, becauſe GOD has made them white, triangular, and juſt; and that omnipotence itſelf cannot make black, ſquare, nor unjuſt, what omnipotence makes white, triangular, and juſt. Theſe are moſt immutable truths, no doubt, and deſerve to have their place at the fountain-head of ſcience; but theſe philoſophers do not mean by their eternal, independent natures, any natures at all. They mean ſuch intelligible eſſences, and rationes of things, as are objects of the mind. Now, the objects of our minds being nothing but our ideas, it follows, that theſe natures, ſo much talked of, are not natures, but ſimple or complex ideas of natures; and all the incorporeal ſubſtances vaniſh into air, that is, they are confeſſedly phantaſtic, not real. They are merely certain abſtract ideas which philoſophers have taken it into their heads to affirm that they frame, and in which affirmation I may have leave to be of opinion, that they deſerve no more credit than a man who is in any other delirium. They who are as ſubtile as ARISTOTLE or CUDWORTH, who can diſcover, with the firſt, that ſenſe is the ſame with ſenſible things, and with both, that underſtanding is the ſame with the things underſtood, may find out, likewiſe, that the nature of a thing, and the idea of that nature are one

and

and the ſame. But I ſuppoſe, that they who preſerve their common ſenſe free from the taint of metaphyſics, will not eaſily conceive, that their ideas, however general or abſtracted, can be called, with the leaſt propriety, immaterial eſſences, incorporeal ſubſtances, eternal, immutable, and ſo on.

It is an obſervation of Mr. Locke, that "we have very "few abſtract names for our ideas of ſubſtances, and that "the few which the ſchools have forged, could never get into "common uſe, nor obtain public approbation; whereas all our "ſimple ideas have abſtract as well as concrete names, and ſo "have our ideas of modes and relations." From hence that great author infers a confeſſion of all mankind, that they have no ideas of the real eſſences of ſubſtances, and a declaration, that their ſimple ideas, and thoſe of modes and relations are real eſſences, or the ideas of real eſſences. Now, the truth of the ſuppoſed confeſſion I admit entirely; but the truth of the ſuppoſed declaration is not ſo evident, and requires ſome explanation as it is expreſſed. It is, if I miſtake not, in part falſe, and in part true, and ſerves neither Mr. Locke's purpoſe, nor Dr. Cudworth's, even where it is true. To argue from the uſe of words to the reality of things, is no very ſure method. Languages are framed by the vulgar, not by philoſophers: and when names are improperly given, and words come to be improperly applied, cuſtom eſtabliſhes them ſoon, and they eaſily miſlead even the minds of philoſophers. The ſubject before us affords an example of this ſort, and if we examine it a little attentively, we ſhall find a corner of Mr. Locke's ſyſtem about ideas, rent and torn, but the whole fabric of Dr. Cudworth's demoliſhed to the foundations.

Words have been invented and applied, and names have been aſſigned, as men wanted them, or fancied, by miſtake,

that they wanted them, to communicate their ideas with more preciſion, or even to conceive them more diſtinctly. Whatever advantage has been procured to the improvement of knowledge by the firſt manner of proceeding, much confuſion and error have ariſen from the ſecond; innumerable inſtances of which there are. One of the greateſt, and of the moſt pernicious in its conſequences, we find in the uſe and application of the word abſtraction. There is a very practicable operation of the mind, by which we are ſaid to abſtract ideas, and by which we do, in effect, generalize them in a certain manner, and to a certain degree, by ſubſtituting one as repreſentative of many. There is another ſuppoſed, but impracticable operation of the mind, by which ſome philoſophers have made themſelves and others believe, that they abſtract, from a multitude of particular ideas, the idea of one general nature or eſſence, which is all of them, and none of them: whereas, in truth, tho' they can define general natures or eſſences in very clear propoſitions, they cannot frame an idea of any general nature, which is not a particular idea of that nature.

SINCE men do not commonly employ abſtract names for their ideas of ſubſtances, it is a ſhrewd ſign, indeed, that they are not conſcious of any ideas of ſubſtances made by the ſecond kind of abſtraction, as Mr. LOCKE obſerves, but content themſelves, in this caſe, with general ideas made by the firſt. To talk of nominal eſſences, and the abſtraction of ſuch, comes too near the gibberiſh of the ſchools about genera and ſpecies: and if it does not coincide with the doctrine of certain eſſential forms, or moulds, wherein different things are caſt, as it were, to conſtitute different natures, it perplexes the underſtanding, and darkens the plaineſt objects of it but little leſs. If we lay aſide theſe refinements, and think for ourſelves, we ſhall ſoon diſcover, unleſs I am extremely miſtaken, that the former me-

thod of abſtracting or generalizing our ideas, is the univerſal practice of mankind; and that the latter is purely imaginary, not only in the caſe of ſubſtances, and of ſimple ideas, whereof the real eſſences are, in my opinion, equally unknown to us, but in the caſe of modes and relations, whoſe real eſſences muſt of neceſſity be known to us, ſince our underſtanding frames them.

NOTHING can be more true than what Mr. LOCKE himſelf confeſſes, that "general and univerſal belong not to the real "exiſtence of things, but are the inventions and creatures of "the underſtanding, made by it for its own uſe, and concern "only ſigns, whether words or ideas *." On this principle I proceed; but it will not carry me to all the conſequences my maſter, for ſuch I am proud to own him, deduced from it. Let us conſider ſubſtances in the firſt place. We have innumerable ideas of particular ſubſtances, and I need not ſtand to ſhew how little improvement we ſhould make in knowledge, and how impoſſible it would be to reaſon, or to communicate any reaſonings about them, by the help of ſuch ideas alone. How then does the mind proceed? As theſe complex ideas are innumerable, ſo are they beyond meaſure various. Out of this variety the mind ſelects ſuch as have a more remote, and ſuch as have a more immediate reſemblance, and claſſes them accordingly. From this operation of the mind has ariſen the ſchool diſtinction of genus and ſpecies. Now, to ſpeak according to it, which we may do intelligibly on this occaſion, as the mind is unable, by abſtraction, or any imaginable way, to comprehend any one ſpecies, and much more any one genus, under one general idea, it comprehends each under one general name, and we ſay, for inſtance, man, or animal. The mind does ſtill more in the former caſe; for, all the ideas that com-

* Eſſay, lib. iii. c. 3.

poſe

poſe a ſort or ſpecies having a cloſe reſemblance to one another, the mind ſubſtitutes one, as I ſaid above, to repreſent them all. This ideal man is neither PETER nor PAUL; it is not the idea of any particular man; it is a particular idea of man made general by the application. The architypes of this phantaſm are without, and it is abſtracted, if you pleaſe to uſe the word, from them. But it is ſo far from being an abſtract univerſal idea of man, abſtracted from thoſe particular forms, or complex phantaſms, which the mind repreſents to itſelf (as CUDWORTH affirms againſt intuitive knowledge) that it is one of theſe very phantaſms. It is not, in ſhort, an idea of humanity. The mind creates it to ſupply the want of an idea we cannot have. A general univerſal idea is inconſiſtent with the real exiſtence of things: but ſuch a particular idea of that which may exiſt becomes itſelf an architype, according to which we include, in the ſame ideal claſs, or exclude out of it, the objects that ſtrike our ſenſes. Thus it becomes general, by the uſe the mind makes of it, tho' it be particular, and be ſignified by a particular word.

THE mind proceeds in the ſame manner with reſpect to all the other ſorts or ſpecies, into which it has claſſed its ideas of ſubſtances. But with reſpect to kinds, or genera, this cannot be. They may be, and they are comprehended under diſtinct general names; but none of them can be repreſented to the mind by any particular phantaſm or idea, as in the other caſe. How ſhould there be one common architype for things that have not a cloſe, but a very remote reſemblance? Such are the various ſorts which every kind contains: and therefore when the mind would advert to the idea, as well as to the name of animal, it finds itſelf diſappointed. Far from having any abſtract univerſal idea, it has not ſo much as a particular idea that may be generalized, and ſtand in the place of the other.

THERE are two other operations which the mind performs not conſtantly, but occaſionally. The firſt may ſerve to facilitate the communication of knowledge: the ſecond has ſerved to nothing but to facilitate the introduction of error. From the names that ſignify particular ſorts, we deduce ſometimes, and as the mind has need of them, adjectives, or concrete terms, that fix and appropriate to each ſort whatever belongs to it, or is meaned to be aſcribed to it. Thus from man we derive human, and we ſpeak of human figure when we would ſignify the figure peculiar to him, and of human paſſions when we would apply thoſe to him which belong to him, tho' they are, at the ſame time, common to him, and to other animals. But the ſchoolmen have not ſtopped here. They have invented words to ſignify, very confuſedly and falſely, what was ſignified very diſtinctly and truly before. Thus, for example, they have coined the terms, humanity and animality. If they meaned to ſignify, by theſe terms, nothing more than what we know to be comprehended under the names of man and animal, I ſhould have no objection to the uſe of them, nor to thoſe of tableity, cuppeity, and gobleity, when cuſtom had eſtabliſhed them, as much as DIOGENES ſcoffed at PLATO for introducing them into philoſophy. But PLATO did mean ſomething elſe, and ſo has many a deep metaphyſician and logician, ſince his time, and after his example. They have not meaned only thoſe appearances, according to which the minds of men have ſorted things, which Mr. LOCKE calls nominal eſſences, and which, he ſays, are the abſtract ideas their names ſtand for: but they have meaned real eſſences, intelligible natures, the patterns and architypes, according to which every thing is what it is. The firſt is, to me, unintelligible; for I neither comprehend how eſſences can be purely nominal, nor how words can be abſtract ideas: and the ſecond is, I ſuppoſe,

at this time, an exploded opinion among rational men. In ſhort, he muſt know his own mind very ill, or knowing it well in other inſtances, muſt be ſtrangely deceived in this by the prejudices of imagination, who can perſuade himſelf, that the words humanity and animality have any other ideas annexed to them than the words man and animal. When the firſt raiſes any idea in the mind, it is one of thoſe complex phantaſms that have been mentioned, and that draws after it, ſucceſſively, but rapidly, the ideas of all thoſe qualities, corporeal and intellectual, which are ſignified when we join to them the term, human. When the ſecond raiſes any idea at all there, a confuſed huddle of ideas ruſh into the mind at once; an aſſemblage of ſeveral ſpecies of animals that throng together, like thoſe which throng about ADAM, in the famous deſign of Mr. JOHN OVERTON, to receive their names from the firſt of men, who became thus the inſtitutor of nominal eſſences.

BUT now, if it ſhould be confeſſed, that we know nothing of the real eſſences of ſubſtances, and therefore can abſtract no ſuch ideas of them as ſome have pretended; if it ſhould be confeſſed further, that nominal eſſences are nothing more than general names of particular things, not made by abſtraction, but by impoſition; yet ſtill it would be aſſerted, perhaps, that our ſimple ideas are real eſſences; that the mind is able to abſtract their general from their particular natures; and that we give them, for that reaſon, both abſtract and concrete names; the truth of which latter propoſitions I ſhould take the liberty to deny, as well as that of the former. Our ſimple ideas, not one of which it is in our power to make, or to unmake, may be called, properly enough, intellectual atoms, the principles or materials of our whole intellectual ſyſtem. Matter, and the atoms that compoſe it, have been thought eternal, and if we aſſume,

assume, that they were created in time, we must assume too, that they were created at once. The same atoms, specific in number, as well as of specific natures, pass thro' all the changes, and take all the various forms, which we observe in the material world. There is no new, no continued creation of them. But we know, consciously, that there is a continued creation of these intellectual atoms, that is, of simple ideas, in the intellectual world, in different minds, and even in the same mind, neither specific in number, nor, perhaps, always exactly so in nature; and thus they are not only combined, as the former are always, with one another, that is, with the same, but new ideas, that arise from new perceptions, enter very often into these combinations. There is another difference to be observed, much more to our purpose. We can analyse more easily, and with greater success, our complex into simple ideas, than we can decompound substances. In one of these operations, we go up to the intellectual atoms. In the other, we stop far short of the corporeal. To what now is this difference owing? Is it owing to our strength, or to our weakness? Is it a difference, as it may appear at first sight, in favor of the human mind? Much otherwise. It serves only to shew the deficiency and imperfection of our simple ideas, of the first principles of all our knowledge. If these were not so confined, and so superficial as they are most evidently, if they were extended to more objects, and made their impressions on us from a spring that lay deeper in the nature of things, we should know much more than we do concerning the composition and decomposition of substances. If they were real essences, or the ideas of real essences, we should be acquainted with the real essences of substances, at least to a certain degree: for, what do we mean, when we say, that we have no knowledge of the real essences of substances, except these two things? We mean certainly, that we have not a number of

ideas ſufficient for the acquiſition of ſuch knowledge; and thus the deficiency of ſimple ideas cauſes one half of our ignorance about the complex ideas of ſubſtances. We mean, likewiſe, that the ſimple ideas, which we perceive by the impreſſions of outward objects, are often falſe, and always inadequate to the nature of theſe objects; and thus the imperfection of ſimple ideas cauſes another half, at leaſt, of our ignorance about the complex ideas of ſubſtances.

SIMPLE ideas are real eſſences. Of what? Of ſimple ideas? Of themſelves? Juſt ſo certain metaphyſical ideas are real ideas. They are really in the mind; but they have no other reality. Such eſſences and ſuch ideas are chimerical alike. All our ſimple ideas ariſe from ſenſation and reflection, from the impreſſions of outward objects, and from the operations of our minds. What the powers are that make theſe impreſſions on the mind in a paſſive ſtate, we know as little as we do, what thoſe are to which the operations of the mind, in an active ſtate, are due. But this we know, the powers that cauſe are more properly eſſences, than the ſimple ideas that are cauſed by them. An eſſence is that by which a thing is what it is. We have an idea of white, we know what it is in our minds: but do we know by virtue of what, it is what it is there? Certainly we do not. It is not ſo much as the idea of any knowable eſſence: how can it be itſelf a known eſſence? Or, what ſeek we further than to know that it is a ſenſation?

SUCH concrete names were neceſſary to be invented, not to ſignify things that exiſt by themſelves like ſubſtances, but to ſignify qualities, ſo we uſually call them, that cannot exiſt independently of ſome ſubſtance in which they appear to exiſt, and are conveyed to the mind in the complex idea of it.

As it is real or apparent want that determines the invention and uſe of names, ſo there have been ſome, and may be more invented, to ſignify, by one general word, and to appropriate to one ſubſtance, all the particular ideas that men conceive to belong to it, or deſire to apply to it. This has been obſerved already, and here we obſerve further, that theſe terms are limited by the ſubſtance to which they are applied, human by man, golden by gold, and ſo in ſome, not in many, other inſtances of ſorts or kinds, juſt as cuſtom has decided. It is not much otherwiſe in the caſe of the concrete terms, which ſignify each one ſimple idea. The complex idea of man was in the mind, before the word human was invented to ſignify, without the trouble of enumerating them, all the particular ideas comprehended in that complex idea. The ſubſtantive gave occaſion to the adjective. So the complex ideas of all thoſe ſubſtances that communicate to us, among other ſimple ideas, thoſe of white and black, for inſtance, were in the mind before the names of theſe ſimple ideas were invented. This was enough for uſe: and our ideas, when theſe names were invented, as well as the names of the ſeveral ſubſtances to which they belonged, were enough determined and diſtinguiſhed. But the ſchools were not thus contented. They endeavored to eſtabliſh the doctrine of general natures abſtracted from particular; and ſince they endeavored it, without ſucceſs, in the complex ideas of ſubſtances, they reſolved to do it in the caſe of our ſimple ideas; and thus whiteneſs and blackneſs, and all the abſtract names of ſimple ideas, were confirmed in general uſe.

The ſame ſimple ideas being communicated to us from a multitude of different ſubſtances; and being obſerved to be the ſame in the child, and in the man, in the peaſant, and in the

the philoſopher, they might eaſily paſs for adequate ideas of real natures imparted to all the ſubſtances wherein they were perceived. Thus the vulgar might think very naturally; and, in fact, not only children, but much the greateſt part of men, are firmly perſuaded, that the idea of white, which they perceive in ſnow or milk, is whiteneſs in the ſnow or milk. Nay, this opinion, exploded as it is at preſent, has been that of the great oracles of philoſophy, and many puerilities have been grounded on it, which are ſcarce yet a-while laughed out of the world. They who ſaw formerly, or who ſee now, the impropriety of theſe words, in a philoſophical ſenſe, as they denote real eſſences, or abſtract ideas of ſuch, may have thought, however, not only that the uſe of them is of ſome conveniency in language, but that it is a very harmleſs conceſſion to the vulgar. They may have thought it too an indulgence of no great moment to the doctors of abſtraction, who have refined themſelves, on this occaſion, as philoſophers do ſometimes, into vulgar error.

Whiteness and blackneſs ſeem to ſtand in the ſame degree of a ſuppoſed abſtraction with humanity, and color with animality. This would be admitted by ſome, whilſt others would contend that it is practicable, with application, and a ſtrong effort of the mind, to abſtract general natures of ſorts or ſpecies from many particular ideas that we perceive to be the ſame in ſubſtances of different ſorts or ſpecies, as in the former inſtance, that of whiteneſs or blackneſs, they ſay they do; but that it is impracticable to abſtract ſuch a general nature from many particular ideas that we perceive not to be the ſame, tho' co-exiſting in the ſame ſubſtance, as in the inſtance of humanity, they ſay they cannot. They would contend further, that tho' it be practicable to abſtract the general natures even of kinds, as well as the leſs general natures of

ſorts, where ſimple ideas are alone concerned; yet it is impracticable to do the ſame, where the various ſorts that compoſe the kind are ſo many complex ideas, as in the inſtance of animality they ſay they cannot. But, I think, we may affirm all this to be whimſical and falſe alike, without entering into the diſpute between theſe doctors of abſtraction, and on this ſingle principle, whereof we have an intuitive knowledge, That things cannot exiſt in our minds as it is impoſſible they ſhould exiſt in nature. Now ſingulars do, but univerſals, about which ſo much noiſe has been made in the ſchools, and ſo many good heads have been broken formerly in the univerſities of London, and of Paris, do not exiſt in nature. It is therefore as impoſſible to abſtract ideas of whiteneſs or blackneſs from all white or black things, as it is to abſtract an idea of humanity from all human exiſtence; or an idea of color from all things colored, as it is to abſtract an idea of animality from all animal exiſtence. In all theſe caſes, having no real eſſence to abſtract, we have nothing to abſtract.

Let us conſider, whether we are able to make ſuch abſtractions, when real eſſences are known to us, as they are in modes and relations. For my part, I know that I am not. I am utterly unable to elevate my mind from particulars to generals, as we muſt do in order to acquire Dr. Cudworth's apodictical knowledge, of which therefore I muſt be content to remain deprived. I know the real eſſence of triangularity, and can define it in one ſhort propoſition. But to contemplate triangularity, abſtracted from every triangular figure, is to my narrow and weak mind as impoſſible as to contemplate humanity, abſtracted from every human figure, and every human quality. He who can frame the idea of a triangle, which is neither right, obtuſe, nor acute-angled, nor, in ſhort, of any

any triangular ſpecies, but is all, and none of theſe, at once: he, I ſay, if in truth there is any ſuch, he muſt be of a ſpecies different from mine, as ſurely as he would be ſo, if his ſight could pierce to the center of the earth, or diſcern every frozen inhabitant of Saturn. Triangularity is ſo far from being no particular triangle, that it is every particular triangle: and no man, as I preſume, can think of a ſpace included by three lines that meet at three angles, without thinking of ſome one or more particular triangles. Triangularity can be no otherwiſe repreſented to the mind. The definition gives particular ideas, but is not itſelf an idea. I know the real eſſence of juſtice, and can define it ſeveral ways, as, for inſtance, by ſaying, after TULLY, "Juſtitiæ primum munus "eſt ut ne cui quis noceat, niſi laceſſitus injuriâ; deinde ut "communibus pro communibus utatur, privatis autem ut "ſuis." But what then? Do theſe definitions, or their contraries, a conformity to one, or the other of which conſtitutes every action juſt, or unjuſt, form, in any mind, one abſtract idea of juſtice? We can contemplate each of theſe apart, and compare any particular action with it, but we cannot abſtract any general nature, with which we may compare every action that falls under ſome one of theſe definitions. Juſtice is a word that denotes particular natures, under a general term, but expreſſes no general nature.

IF there were ſuch general natures as are ſuppoſed, they would exiſt in the mind, and be perceived there. They do not exiſt in the mind; for they are not perceived by it. They exiſt then no where, whatever PLATO might dream, or might ſay hypothetically and poetically. The mind creates real eſſences for it's own uſe; but that the mind abſtracts, even from theſe creatures of it's own, any general natures, is a mere poetical fiction, which has been adopted, like many other

fictions of the ſame author, for a philoſophical truth. All the real eſſences we know are ſo far from being uncreated, that they are creatures of the human mind; they are ſo far from being independent, that they are dependent on the will of man, as far as concerns their exiſting or not exiſting; they are ſo far from being ingenerable, unperiſhable, and even immutable, that they begin to be and ceaſe to be in the mind, and that whilſt they actually exiſt there, if they were not maintained by diſtinct names, and by a conſtant attention of the mind to them and to their names, they would fluctuate and vary without any preciſion or ſteadineſs.

When the Stagyrite declared moſt dogmatically, that he would have Heraclitus, Cratylus, and Protagoras to know, that, beſides ſenſible things, which they ſuppoſed always to flow, and he admitted to be always mutable, there were other beings or entities, neither ſubject to motion, corruption, nor generation, but immovable eſſences, the objects of theoretical knowledge, of the firſt philoſophy, and of pure mathematics; when he ſpoke in ſuch high terms, I ſay, the flowing philoſophers might have told him that intellectual beings or entities were very much given to flow, as well as ſenſible things; and that immovable eſſences, how well ſoever fixed by definitions, were not always immovable even in his own mind, ſince they did not appear to be ſtrictly ſo in his writings.

After ſaying ſo much about theſe abſtract ideas, I muſt freely confeſs that I ſcarce comprehend what they are intended to be. They are ſeparate from matter, according to Aristotle. They are free from all corporeal ſympathy, according to Cudworth. Nay they are, even thoſe of them whoſe real eſſences we know, ſuch as triangularity and juſtice, imperfect ideas, ideas that cannot exiſt, ideas wherein ſome parts

parts of ſeveral different and inconſiſtent ideas are put together, according to Mr. Locke. Thus abſtraction becomes as great a myſtery in philoſophy, as any that religion holds out to us: and I am ſo little able to unfold myſteries, that I might ſit forty years together in deep meditation over-againſt a white wall, as a Chineſe philoſopher is ſaid to have done, and to as little purpoſe as he, if I pretended to unfold this inexplicable ſort of abſtraction. Who can help ſmiling, when he is told, that by the help of ſuch ideas, and of certain ſelf-evident maxims, knowledge is a comprehenſion of things proleptically, or by way of anticipation, or à priori; and that abſtraction is that higher ſtation from whence the mind comprehends things in this manner, from whence by it's ſubtile ſharpneſs it penetrates into the eſſential profundity of body, of ſphericalneſs, of triangularity, &c.

Strange effects of myſterious abſtraction! Strange foundations of eternal and immutable morality! They might be rejected with contempt, if they were abſurd only; but they are carried ſo far that they become prophane, a ſort of metaphyſical blaſphemy, and deſerve indignation. Could I ſuſpect the leaſt neceſſary connexion between ſuch opinions and the proofs of God's exiſtence, I ſhould not treat them as familiarly as I have done, and intend to do. But there is nothing which ſhocks me ſo much, in the treatiſe I ſpeak of, as the attempt to prove in a circle, that ſince univerſal notions, the ſuppoſed immediate objects of ſcience, are eternal and neceſſarily exiſtent, there is an eternal and neceſſarily exiſtent mind; and that ſince there is ſuch a mind, there muſt be ſuch ideas and notions as the author aſſumes. But it may be worth while to ſet this reaſoning down a little more at large.

" Since

" SINCE we cannot conceive that there was ever a time " when it was not yet actually true that the three angles of " a triangle are equal to two right angles, or that equals " added to equals produce equals, and the like in other in- " ſtances; theſe intelligible natures, theſe neceſſary verities, " had a being before the material world and all particular in- " tellects had any." Again: " Since theſe natures, theſe ve- " rities, are, according to PLATO, nothing but noëmata, objec- " tive notions or knowledges, that is, in good Engliſh, objects " of thought, they could not exiſt without ſome mind in which " they were comprehended. There is therefore an eternal " mind which comprehended them always, or rather a mind " which is itſelf theſe natures, theſe verities, theſe abſtract " ideas." Thus again, and to reaſon quite round the circle. " Since there is an eternal mind, that being muſt always com- " prehend himſelf, the extent of his own power, the ideas of " all poſſible things. Now theſe natures, theſe verities, are " included in theſe ideas. Our abſtract ideas and univerſal " notions are therefore eternal and ſelf-exiſtent like GOD him- " ſelf. If there were none ſuch, there would be no GOD. " But there are ſuch becauſe there is a GOD, on whom how- " ever they are independent. They cannot be modifications of " matter, they muſt be therefore modifications of an eternal " mind. Every thing that is imperfect muſt needs depend " on ſomething that is perfect in the ſame kind. There is " therefore a cognation, or connection, between our created " minds and the increated mind. Our imperfect intellect " muſt be therefore a derivative participation of the perfect " intellect."

THIS rhapſody of jargon is faithfully extracted, and, for the moſt part, in CUDWORTH's own words.

A CLOSE affinity between the divine and the human mind, and a certain ſameneſs of ideas and notions, is the common boaſt of metaphyſical theology: and father THOMASSIN, and many other learned and good men of all communions, have talked as prophanely on the ſubject as CUDWORTH. Their very great learning ſeduced them into error: they were too good ſcholars to be good philoſophers, and whilſt their minds were filled with the thoughts of PLATO and ARISTOTLE, of St. AUSTIN, and other refining as well as declaiming Chriſtian fathers, there was no room for their own; or their own were grafted on theſe, and extended and improved from them. "La paſſion même que nous avons pour la verité nous trompe "quelquefois, lorſqu'elle eſt trop ardente. Mais le deſir de "paroître ſavant eſt ce qui nous empêche le plus d'acquerir "une ſcience véritable.*" It is father MALEBRANCHE who ſpeaks thus: and he was himſelf a great example of what is here ſaid; for tho' his ſublime genius could not ſtoop to copy ſervilely, as others have done, yet he took his hints and his manner from PLATO and St. AUSTIN principally, and added one beautiful whimſy to another, till he builded up a ſyſtem that carries no conviction to the mind, and only ſerves to give great admiration of the author.

II.

OTHER divines, beſides CUDWORTH, have aſſumed that GOD knows according to our manner of knowing, by the help of ideas. Thus CLARKE, in his book of Demonſtrations, which has had much more reputation than it deſerves,

* Recherche, &c. B. II. p. ii. c. 7.

aſſumes

aſſumes that goodneſs and juſtice in GOD are the ſame as in our ideas, and that the relations, proportions, and rationes of things are abſolutely and neceſſarily what they appear to be to the underſtandings of all intelligent beings; among whom he muſt needs comprehend the Supreme Being, ſince he makes theſe relations, proportions and rationes of things to be the rule or law by which GOD proceeds, and for his obſervation of which he appeals to man. Thus he affirms, at leaſt, that GOD knows by the help of ideas. But MALEBRANCHE outſhoots him, and confines the Supreme all perfect Being to this human manner of knowing. He allows him no other. He denies that he can have any other. The ideas of bodies and of all other objects "que nous n'appercevons point par eux "mêmes," becauſe they are exterior to the ſoul, are perceived by us for no other reaſon but this, they are in GOD, in him we ſee them. All the ideas of created beings muſt be in GOD, it was abſolutely neceſſary that they ſhould be ſo; becauſe if they had not been ſo, he could not have created ſuch beings. "Puiſqu' autrement il n' auroit pas pu les produire." He could no more have made ADAM, if he had not had the idea of ADAM in his mind, than KNELLER could have painted your picture, if he had not had the idea of you in his mind.

HEATHEN divines builded their theology, not only on phyſical, but on moral philoſophy. They made gods, not only of the elements and the parts of this material ſyſtem, but of the faculties of the human intellect, as of memory; of the paſſions of the mind, as of hope, fear, love; of our affections and habits, as of piety, of juſtice, of virtue, and ſo on. Now it ſeems that if this antient polytheiſm and idolatry was to be renewed, the doctrine I have combated would contribute extremely to the introduction of it. Theſe abſtract ideas, every one of which is an eternal eſſence, an intelligible nature, an incorporeal

corporeal ſubſtance, might paſs for proper objects of adoration; ſince they are repreſented as eternal patterns according to which all things are made or done, as eternal principles by a participation of which every thing is what it is. Why ſhould they not be adored? They are independent on GOD: nay GOD is ſo far dependent on them, that his will is determined, and his conduct and operations are directed, by them.

OUR proneneſs to meaſure all other beings by ourſelves grows up into ſtrange extravagance, when we preſume to meaſure in ſome ſort even GOD by this rule. GOD has given us a manner of knowing fitted to our ſyſtem, and ſufficient for all our real buſineſs in it. We can conceive no other. But is there then no other? Is the poſitive nature of GOD, is the extent of his power, confined to the limits of our conceptions? There is an eye which never winks, a ſun which never ſets; but, with Dr. CUDWORTH's leave, the abſurdity lies on the ſide of the philoſopher who pretends to ſee with this eye, and to walk in the brightneſs or lucidity, to uſe his word, of this ſun: not on the ſide of a modeſt and humble theiſt, who is far from all metaphyſical preſumption and theological arrogance, and therefore dares not aſſume ſo much in his own favor, nor in favor of any created being. Such a man will think that he makes a much more appoſite ſimile, when he ſays that we are ſhut up in one of thoſe dark caverns of the univerſe, mentioned in the Phædo; that there we grope about after knowledge, not by the light of the ſun, but by that of a ſmall and dim taper. This light, whatever it is, was beſtowed on us by GOD. He gave us our light. He did not give us his own. They who think in this manner cannot be ſuſpected of being too near a-kin to thoſe antient theologues ARISTOTLE ſpeaks of, who fetched the original of GOD and all things out of night. They who think in the other, would do well

to conſider whether they are not too near a-kin to thoſe, who have promoted, in all ages, of heatheniſm and of chriſtianity, ſuperſtition in religion, paradox in philoſophy, and enthuſiaſm in both.

It may be ſaid, you know it has been ſaid by one I love and honor *, "that the immediate object of knowledge being "called an idea, there is no inconvenience in ſaying that God "knows objects, that he knows ideas in the proper ſenſe of the "word, which is Locke's ſenſe; altho' our conception of God's "knowledge, or any other of his attributes, be infinitely inade-"quate, yet he ſaw no abſurdity in ſuppoſing that human "knowledge hath ſome ſimilitude to the divine, as a thing finite "and imperfect, and weak and ſmall, can have to that which is "infinite and all perfect; nor in ſuppoſing, with the ſcripture, "that we are made in the likeneſs of God; nor in ſuppoſing "with the Greek poet, that we are his offspring; and with the "Latin, that we contain divinæ particulum auræ." It ſeems evident to him, "that intellect is above the powers of motion "and figure, and that it is of kind altogether incorporeal." I reſpect the authority which made this objection to what I have ſaid, and ſhall therefore go as far as I can in ſubmiſſion to it. I ſee no inconveniency in ſpeaking of the divine ideas, when we ſpeak of the divine knowledge. On the contrary, I ſee much conveniency in it; becauſe I apprehend that we can neither conceive any thing, nor explain our conceptions on many occaſions, concerning God's knowledge, without aſcribing to him hypothetically the ſole manner of knowing that is known to us. But I think it, however, both abſurd and prophane to pronounce dogmatically, that this is God's manner of knowing, that he has no other, and that without the help of ideas he

* B. of C.

could

could neither govern the world as he governs it, nor have made it as he made it. To ſay, in allegorical or poetical ſtyle, that we are made in the image of God, that we are his offſpring, or that we contain divinæ particulam auræ, may paſs for ſome of thoſe images by which we endeavor, and often improperly enough, to help our own thoughts, and the communication of them; but ſurely they are not to be employed in the didactic ſtyle, and ſo as to paſs, not for diſtant images of truths that we cannot contemplate nearly and directly, but for real truths which we do ſo contemplate. I do not believe that matter can draw intellect, to uſe an expreſſion of L'Abbadie, out of its own boſom; neither do I believe that the incorporeity of the ſoul can be proved from the non-exiſtence of matter, which my right reverend friend takes to be a demonſtrable point. Intellect is certainly above the mere powers of motion and figure, according to all the ideas we have of them; and therefore I embrace very readily the opinion of thoſe, who aſſume that God, who has, without any color of doubt, notwithſtanding ſome logical and trifling cavils, the power of doing it, has been pleaſed to ſuperadd to ſeveral ſyſtems of matter, in ſuch manner and in ſuch proportions as his infinite wiſdom has thought fit, the power of thinking. Every other hypotheſis ſeems to me unconceivable, and this, of which ſo much has been ſaid here, particularly dangerous. It might ſerve to introduce polytheiſm, or it is not very far from ſpinoziſm. I could be an anthropomorphite and believe the human figure to be God's figure, as ſoon as I could believe the human intellect to be God's intellect, and the modifications of the former to be the modifications of the latter. If I was abſurd enough to be perſuaded of this, I ſhould be abſurd enough eaſily to believe, with the help of intelligible natures and incorporeal ſubſtances, or ſubſtances "quaſi incorporeal," as many gods as men, and to erect a larger pantheon than the gods of the heathen

or your ſaints require. If I avoided this extreme, the ſame hypotheſis might draw me into another, and I might perſuade myſelf, that ſince there is an univerſal mind, in which all ideas are contained, and of which every particular mind is a participation, every intelligence, down to the loweſt, is a modification of the ſame mind, as every material ſyſtem is a modification of the ſame matter; which would bid fair for a compoſition with SPINOZA: and two ſubſtances might render a Supreme Being as unneceſſary as one ſubſtance, to which the modifications of both kinds are aſcribed in a manner leſs conformable to our ideas, and much more repugnant to theology.

I HAVE as good a right to deny, as the moſt dogmatical writer can poſſibly have to affirm, that the Supreme Being knows by the intervention of ideas. Nay the negative is more probable than the affirmative on many accounts, and particularly on this, that our manner of knowing ſeems neither immediate, abſolute, nor perfect enough to be aſcribed to him. To talk poſitively of the divine nature and attributes, and to determine, on our ſuppoſed knowledge of them, any thing more than we are able to collect from his works, and the proceedings of his providence, is very great preſumption, tho' the common practice of divines. But to deny concerning them whatever implies the leaſt defect or imperfection, is highly reaſonable, and eſſential to true theiſm. Of the excellencies of GOD's nature we can have no adequate ideas: they are infinite. But this we can know moſt certainly, that thoſe things, which are ſhort even of the excellencies we are able to comprehend, ought not to be aſcribed to him. That the firſt cauſe of all things is an intelligent cauſe, may be proved invincibly à poſteriori, and can be proved no other way; after which it will not require much logic to demonſtrate à priori, that the all-perfect Being muſt be omniſcient, as well as ſelf-exiſtent. But how he knows, or what knowledge is in him, we are unable to ſay.

We may frame dark and confuſed notions of knowledge vaſtly ſuperior to our own in kind as well as degree, and we ſhould do much better to reſt in theſe, dark and confuſed as they are, than to frame others, which, being deduced from our own, are ſeemingly too adequate to be really true. The paſt, the preſent, and the future, as we conceive them, are known alike to the Supreme Being, not by the perception, the retention, or the anticipation of ideas, but in a manner inconceivable by us; for there is, I think, a plain fallacy in this expreſſion, that the immediate object of knowledge being called an idea, we may ſay that God knows an object, that he knows an idea. When we ſpeak of objects of human knowledge, we allude to the ſenſe of ſeeing, and we apply, very properly, the alluſion to the inward perceptions of the mind. But ſurely no man, who tries to elevate his notions of the all perfect Being as much as he can above the low level of humanity, for ſo I will call what we know of the human nature, can think the ſame alluſion applicable to the divinity. Outward and inward ſenſe have a great connexity in the human ſyſtem. The former gives occaſion to the latter, they help one another, and both have their objects. But it will no more follow that God thinks like man, than that he ſees like man. He may have conſcious knowledge of all things poſſible, as we have conſcious knowledge of our own exiſtence, a knowledge which prevents even thought, ſo far from being originally, whatever we make it afterwards, an object of thought. But further. When God is ſaid to know objects, he is ſaid to know ideas. The words are taken ſynonimouſly on this occaſion. But we muſt diſtinguiſh them. A knowledge of things as they are, and a knowledge of the ideas of them, are extremely different, as different as immediate and reflected light, as abſolute and relative knowledge. Every thing we know is known to us in the ſecond manner; nothing in the firſt. Every thing is known

known to God in the firſt: and he has no need of knowing any thing in the ſecond. As it would be abſurd to ſay, that God receives ideas from external objects, ſo it is no leſs abſurd to ſay either that the divine mind combines and abſtracts ideas, or that complex and abſtract ideas exiſt in it, or coexiſt with it, like ſo many incorporeal independent ſubſtances, by the contemplation of which God has, and Plato and his ſcholars aſſures us that men may have, real knowledge.

These hypothetical reflections, on which I lay no more weight than they deſerve, will ſerve at leaſt to ſhew, how little ought to be laid on thoſe dogmas to which they are oppoſed.

If the Supreme Being does not know by the help of ideas, the chain of Dr. Cudworth's reaſoning is broke in the firſt link of it; for there are then no ſuch eternal abſtract ideas, either in or out of the ſupreme mind, as have been ſuppoſed: and all the incorporeal ſubſtances, with the verities clinging like ivy about them, that have been ſaid to exiſt eternally and independently, neither exiſt, nor ever did exiſt, out of the imaginations of metaphyſicians, thoſe fruitful nurſeries of phantaſtic ſcience.

Should any one aſk, like Cudworth, and the ſixth objector to the metaphyſical meditations of Des Cartes, at what time it was not yet actually true that a triangle has three angles equal to two right angles, or when it began to be true that twice four are eight? It would be a full and ſufficient anſwer to ſay, that the time when neither theſe truths, nor the ideas from a compariſon of which they reſult, did exiſt, was that wherein God had not yet created any intelligence whoſe manner of knowing was by the intervention of ideas,

and that these ideas began to exist when such intelligent beings were actually created. There never was a time when two and two were unequal to four. But there was, we may conceive, a time when their equality did not exist, because no numeral things existed, nor any mind to compare them except the supreme mind; which, being assumed not to know by the help of ideas, can no more be said to compare than to perceive them, or to perform any operations about them. If he who made this answer was pressed by arguments drawn from the consequences of it, he would have at least the advantage of retorting arguments drawn from the consequences of the other hypothesis, and of shewing that he, and those learned divines he opposed, were in a case very common to theists and atheists in their disputes. He had difficulties in his way: they had absurdities in theirs. He would own the difficulty of accounting for knowledge independently of ideas: but he would demonstrate the absurdity of maintaining, that knowledge in God is dependent on ideas, and these ideas independent on him. He would have the further advantage of stopping his inquiries where the means of knowledge stop; of confessing his ignorance, and of preserving that awful respect for the Supreme Being which divines are apt, above all other men, to lose, by reasoning about his nature and his attributes, as well as his providence, in a style and manner that no other theist presumes to use, and to which they have no better pretence than that which the taylor gives them by making gowns for them, and coats for every one else.

Were men, even they who affect to examine like philosophers, and to investigate truth in all the recesses of it, less ignorant of that which is nearest to them, of themselves, and less liable to be blinded by their affections and passions, by the force of habit and the determining influence of self-interest, it would

would not be ſo eaſy as it is, to impoſe ſuch high opinions of the human, and ſuch low opinions of the divine nature. In attempting the firſt, metaphyſicians and divines run the riſk of having the conſcious knowledge of every man oppoſed to them; for every man knows, or may know, that the faculties of his mind, and his means of knowledge, are not ſuch as they would perſuade him that they are. Every man has reaſon to ſuſpect, from the natural imperfections, from the accidental infirmities, from the ſenſible growth, maturity, and decay of that which thinks in him, and from its apparent dependance on the body, that his ſoul, whatever it be, has no affinity with the all-perfect Being. To maintain therefore an opinion of this affinity, the ſame perſons have recourſe to another method, from man, whom we can ſee, to GOD, whom we cannot ſee; from man, of whom we have intuitive, to GOD, of whom we have demonſtrative knowledge alone, and which goes little further than a certainty of his exiſtence, and of his infinite power and wiſdom, but not ſo far as to reach his manner of exiſting, or his manner of knowing. The knowledge of men is confined to ideas. They cannot raiſe it higher in imagination, in their own, nor in that of other men. They try therefore to reduce the divine knowledge to their own low level, and, as ſtrange as it is, it is true that they ſucceed.

LET them not ſucceed with you and me. This world, which is the ſcene of our action, is the ſcene of our knowledge: we can derive none that is real from any other, whatever intellectual worlds we may imagine. Let us conſider then how it is conſtituted, in what relations we ſtand, to what ends we are directed. Let us truſt to pure intellect a little leſs than we are adviſed to do, and to our ſenſes a little more. When we have examined and compared the informations we receive from theſe, and have reaſoned à poſteriori from the works

works to the will of GOD, from the conſtitution of the ſyſtem wherein we are placed by him to our intereſt and duty in it, we ſhall have laid the foundations of morality on a rock, inſtead of laying them on the moving ſands, or the hollow ground, that metaphyſics point out to us. Thus we ſhall know, as GOD deſigned we ſhould know, and purſue, as far as our part extends, the plan of infinite wiſdom. Inſtead of amuſing ourſelves vainly with a falſe ſublime, let us keep ſoberly within the bounds of our nature; let us reaſon cautiouſly, pronounce modeſtly, practiſe ſincerely, and hope humbly. To do this, is to be wiſe and good: and to be wiſe and good, is better far than to be a philoſopher, a metaphyſician, or even a divine.

THE law of their nature, is the concern of all men alike. All men are, therefore, able alike to diſcover this law, and the conſtitution of things from which it is derived. All men do not diſcover it indeed alike, tho' all men, even the moſt ſavage and ignorant, have, as I believe, ſome imperfect notions of it, which obſervation and experience force into their minds. If there are any creatures of human figure, to whom even thus much cannot be aſcribed, which I do not believe, they are ranked as improperly under the human ſpecies, as they would be if they had a different figure. Ignorance about the law of nature, like ignorance about many other truths, to which no man can refuſe his aſſent when they are propoſed to his underſtanding, is due to ſome or more of thoſe many reaſons, by which men are diverted from the purſuit of attainable knowledge, or ſtopped in it: and their errors, in this caſe, may be imputed, in ſome degree, to the ſame cauſes, as well as to affections, paſſions, and the force of cuſtom. But philoſophers, divines, and lawyers, who diveſt, or ſhould diveſt themſelves of affections and paſſions, and pay no regard to cuſtom,

run, by a contrary method, into a variety of contrary opinions, concerning one of the plaineſt and moſt important objects of our thoughts. The former ſtop ſhort of that knowledge, which lies within the bounds of human comprehenſion. The latter overlook it, whilſt they aim at knowledge that is unattainable; becauſe it lies beyond the bounds of human nature, and therefore of human comprehenſion.

THE notions on which CUDWORTH endeavours to ground eternal and immutable morality have prevailed much, with ſome difference in the repreſentation of them, among antient and modern theiſts. Let us mention two of the latter only, beſides himſelf, GROTIUS and CLARKE.

ONE would be tempted to think, that when theſe men aſſert the eternity, independency, and immutability of the great principles of the law of our nature, they mean all this comparatively only; comparatively with civil laws, which are novel, dependent on the will of man, and mutable at his pleaſure. One might think it ſtrange too, that they ſhould not diſtinguiſh between the divine preſcience, and the divine inſtitution; or imagine a law, made for man, co-eternal with GOD. But their theological purpoſe in maintaining an opinion liable to ſo many objections, and quite unneceſſary to the eſtabliſhment of our moral obligations on the firmeſt foundation, will appear in the courſe of theſe reflections. Divines, among whom the great lawyer we have mentioned has a juſt right to be reckoned, ſee far before them, and are determined in laying of principles by the conſequences they intend to draw.

PUFFENDORF* is of a contrary opinion to GROTIUS. He cenſures very juſtly thoſe who, like him, endeavor to join

* Law of Nature and Nations, l. 1. c. 2.

with

with GOD any coeval, extrinsical principle, which they assume that he was obliged to follow in assigning the forms and essences of things. He maintains, that the actions of men are perfectly indifferent, if you set aside the consideration of all law divine and human; that the morality of actions in a social creature, is derived from that social nature which GOD has been pleased to give him, and not from any immutable necessity; and he shews how ill those passages of Scripture, which GROTIUS quotes, are applied to prove an original law so truly common to GOD and man, that GOD permits himself to be judged according to it.

CLARKE has, in our time, distinguished himself in defence of the doctrine we oppose. He has made it the first proposition, in his Evidences of natural and revealed religion, with a magisterial air, and all the confidence of those men who talk on every occasion of nothing less than demonstration. "Fiden-"ter sanè, ut solent isti, nihil tam verens, quam ne dubitare "aliqua de re videretur*." This proposition, however, on which he presumes to rest so important a cause, as on the angular stone of all religion, will appear to be absurd and inconsistent, when it is once analysed; and his proofs of it will appear to prove nothing, or to prove what is out of dispute. Thus I think: and if I think rightly, there is the more reason to demolish this false foundation, because it is as easy, as necessary, to lay one that is undeniably true.

THE general absurdity and inconsistency of this proposition lies here. The demonstrator confounds in it two contrary propositions; and sliding, insensibly to many readers, from that which no reasonable man can admit, into that which every

* TULLY de Nat. Deor. Lib. i. speaking of VELLEIUS the Epicurean.

reaſonable man muſt admit, he means nothing by a pomp of words, or he means to make the proofs of the latter paſs for proofs of the former. He aſſerts, that neceſſary and eternal relations of different things to one another, and the conſequent fitneſs and unfitneſs of application of theſe things and of their relations, determine the will of GOD always and neceſſarily to chuſe to act only what is agreeable to juſtice, equity, goodneſs, and truth, that is, to thoſe abſtract ideas, in order to the welfare of the whole univerſe. Theſe expreſſions lead me, they cannot but lead me, to underſtand that the ſame doctrine is intended, as we have ſaid no reaſonable man, no good theiſt moſt certainly, can admit, the doctrine of eternal independent eſſences, as it has been taught. But the ſtate of the queſtion is changed at once; for, after aſſerting that all ſubordinate rational beings ought to determine their wills, and conduct their actions, by the ſame eternal rules by which GOD proceeds in governing, and therefore proceeded in creating, the world; the inſtances brought to prove it are all relative to our human ſtate, and the rules are ſuch as could be no rules antecedently to the exiſtence of ſubordinate rational beings, and moral agents. Let us mention two or three of theſe inſtances. That GOD is infinitely ſuperior to man, is as clear no doubt, as that infinity is larger than a point, or eternity longer than a moment. That men ſhould worſhip and obey GOD, for I dare not uſe theological familiarity and talk of imitating GOD, is as fit, as it is true that they depend on him. In ſhort, general benevolence, fidelity in particular compacts, and all the duties of natural religion, ariſe moſt evidently from a fitneſs of application of different things, and their different relations ariſing from the nature which GOD, according to his good pleaſure, has beſtowed upon us, and from that of the ſyſtem which he has conſtituted, and wherein he has placed us. That GOD is ſuperior to man, and that man ought

to worſhip and obey GOD, are truths that have exiſted ever ſince there was ſuch a rational creature as man to perceive them, and to ſtand in ſuch a relation to GOD. That benevolence, fidelity, and every other moral obligation has exiſted likewiſe, ever ſince there was ſuch a moral agent as man to be obliged by them, and to ſtand in ſuch relations as we ſtand to one another. Is it not enough that we go as high as our nature, to diſcover the laws of it? To what purpoſe do we make that intricate, by metaphyſical abſtractions, which GOD has made ſo extremely plain?

I MIGHT aſk, to what purpoſe this kind of legerdemain is employed in reaſoning? After Dr. CUDWORTH has talked dogmatically of eternal, immutable, independent natures, it comes out that he does not mean real natures, but the ideas that we frame of natures that we aſſume. Much in the ſame manner, after Dr. CLARKE has talked, at leaſt as dogmatically, of an eternal rule by which GOD has always acted neceſſarily, and of juſtice, equity, goodneſs, and truth, as of intelligible natures which have always exiſted, and agreeably to which GOD has always directed his conduct, he proceeds to talk of this very rule not as a rule eternally reſulting from the eternal and independent differences of things and of their relations, but as a rule reſulting from a ſyſtem of beings whom GOD created in time, and from the relation in which he conſtituted them to himſelf and to one another. No man will deny, that a ſquare is double to a triangle of equal baſe and height, from all eternity, if the doctor pleaſes, and rather than engage in ſuch uſeleſs diſquiſitions: but every man of common ſenſe will deny, that there could be a law of human nature before any ſuch nature was in being. CLARKE raiſes man firſt to act by the ſame rule, by which GOD made and governs the univerſe: and after that, he reſtrains infinite knowledge and wiſdom to act by the ſame rule:

rule by which the creatures of God determine, or ought to determine, their wills, and according to the ideas that they derive from the contemplation of their own ſyſtem of being, that is, of a ſmall, and doubtleſs an inconſiderable part of the univerſe, not, by immenſe degrees, of the whole. "Quo te-"neam Protea nodo?" By the firſt we are bewildered in metaphyſical abſtractions, that have no tendency to promote morality; and by the laſt, divines obtain a latitude of making what hypotheſes they pleaſe, and a pretence of reaſoning with the ſame licence about the deſigns and conduct of the living God, as they would take in reaſoning about thoſe of a dead, but not of a living monarch. This is the true theological ſecret: and I believe you will think it is ſo, when we come to conſider Clarke's doctrine concerning the moral attributes of the Supreme Being, and the uſe he makes of it.

But to carry on the analyſe of this firſt propoſition. We are told in it, that theſe eternal and neceſſary differences of things, for ſuch they are ſtill called, cauſe it to be the duty of men, or lay an obligation upon them, to act according to this rule, ſeparate from the conſideration of the will of God, and from any expectation of reward, or fear of puniſhment, annexed either by natural conſequence or by poſitive appointment. Now ſurely this muſt be thought a very odd method of promoting natural religion, and giving evidences of it, ſince it puts the atheiſt and the theiſt into the ſame caſe; and as rules were inconſiſtently jumbled together before, ſo characters are now. The atheiſt may have regard to natural differences alone, and to the conſequences of acting or not acting according to them. He may ſee, that altho' human actions, conſidered merely as natural, and abſtractedly from all relations, circumſtances, and conſequences, might be deemed abſolutely indifferent, yet no human action can be ſo conſidered. The atheiſt, therefore, may think

think himſelf very truly under an obligation of intereſt, ariſing from the different conſequences of his actions, tho' he acknowledges no divine legiſlature; and he would laugh very juſtly at the man who ſhould tell him, that he was not obliged to paſs over the bridge, tho' he might be drowned in the torrent, becauſe there was no act of parliament for it. The theiſt indeed muſt think himſelf, in this reſpect, under an obligation of duty as well as intereſt. Whatever actions are naturally good or evil, muſt appear to him to be ſo morally. They derive their particular natures from the conſtitution of our ſyſtem. They might not have been what they are, if this ſyſtem had not been what it is, and this ſyſtem could not have been what it is, if GOD, who made it, had not willed that it ſhould be ſo. Nay, even on the ſuppoſition of eternal neceſſary differences, and independent natures, it would be ſtill true that the will of GOD conſtitutes the obligation of duty. It would be falſe to aſſert, in the terms of this propoſition, that the ſuppoſed eternal neceſſary differences of things conſtitute it alone. How independent ſoever we ſuppoſe the different natures of things to be, it depended moſt certainly on the will of GOD, who made the ſyſtem, to introduce them into it as he thought fit. If he did not make, he aſſembled, he ordered them; and whatever obligation reſults from them, in this ſyſtem, reſults from them therefore by his will, and is impoſed by it. Once more, and to conclude this analyſe. It is plainly falſe to aſſert, that men are obliged to obſerve the laws of nature on abſtract conſiderations, and for reaſons alone, of the ſame kind as thoſe which determine them to agree about proportions or diſproportions, in geometry and arithmetic. The advantages or diſadvantages, annexed by natural conſequence to the obſervation or breach of the law of nature, do certainly determine the atheiſt who obſerves it without believing a law in the ſtrict ſenſe of the word, but believing an obligation in the ſtricteſt: and it is manifeſt,

that no other conſideration can, nor, on his principles, ought to determine him. The theiſt is determined by the ſame advantages or diſadvantages, ſtill more ſtrongly; becauſe he looks on them as annexed, not only by natural conſequence, but by poſitive and divine appointment. I ſpeak of the theiſt as a philoſopher only. If we conſidered him as a chriſtian, we ſhould conſider him under the influence of further and greater advantages or diſadvantages, annexed by the ſame divine appointment. Thus the matter ſtands very clearly: and tho' men may puzzle it by playing with the words inducement, obligation, will of a ſuperior, law, and others, they cannot alter the ſtate of it.

RIGHT reaſon conſiſts in a conformity with truth, and truth in a conformity with nature. Nature, or the aggregate of things which are, is the great ſource from whence all the rivulets of real knowledge muſt be derived. When we cannot go up, and as far as we cannot go up thither, we muſt remain in ignorance, and we may be the more contented to remain ſo in ſeveral caſes, becauſe we go up in ſeveral to the ſpring head, or at leaſt as far towards it, as the Author of all nature thought it neceſſary that creatures in our rank of being ſhould go. It is a ſtrong inſtance of the perverſity of the human will, but it is true in fact, that men attempt often to go beyond nature, for no better a reaſon than this, becauſe they cannot go up to it; or than this, becauſe they do not find that to be, which imagination had told them might be. Theſe men are metaphyſicians, and by this method they have fallen at all times into error, or into ſomething worſe perhaps than error, but worſe ſurely than ignorance, into doubt, perplexity, needleſs diſquiſitions, and endleſs diſputation. Thus it has fared with the greateſt ſcholars, and with men of the niceſt diſcernment and acuteneſs, with CUDWORTH, for inſtance, and with CLARKE.

CLARKE. In all these cases, the safest side is that of ignorance: if he may be called ignorant, who keeps within the obvious bounds of nature and truth, and presumes to continue the pursuit of knowledge no further. Ignorance belongs more properly to him who is thought to know, whilst he transgresses these bounds, and calls every hypothesis a demonstration.

THAT the philosophers we have mentioned are guilty of this absurdity, has been shewn; and it would not be hard to shew, by many proofs, that whilst they pretend to establish morality, they do real injury to theism. They make the incomprehensible Being, in a certain sense, too comprehensible, and the knowledge of the all-perfect Being too nearly allied to the imperfection of the human.

THINGS are what they are by nature, not by will, says CUDWORTH. Would it not be more consistent with theism, to say, things are what they are by immutable natures, which the will of GOD has given them? Would it not be more within the bounds of human conception, and therefore more reasonable, to say, that GOD constituted these natures in constituting this system, than to assume that these natures, which are contained in our system, and to the knowledge of which we arrive no other way than by the gradual knowledge that we acquire of our system, are independent on it and on the GOD who made it?

THE reason of things, deduced from their differences, from their different relations, and from the different consequences of their applications, may be sufficient for the atheist. He may refer the whole to the powers and operations of something, he knows not what, but something self-existent and eternal, which he thinks fit to call the universe, or universal na-

ture. The theiſt is not ſo content. The reaſon of things is to him that clue by which he conducts himſelf in diſcovering the exiſtence of GOD, and the will of GOD, as far as man is an object of it. But the will of GOD is ſomething leſs, and the reaſon of things is ſomething more, in the eſteem of ſuch of theſe men as call themſelves divines. An eternal reaſon of things, ariſing from their independent natures, and known to man as well as to GOD, is, according to theſe philoſophers and divines, the true criterion of moral good and evil, the rule by which the Creator and the creature are obliged alike to act; with this difference, ariſing from the perfections of one and the imperfections of the other, GOD cannot act otherwiſe, man may. Is it not to be apprehended that men, tainted with ſuch notions as theſe, will reaſon conſtantly à priori, and from them, down to their moral obligations: the conſequence of which may be, that theſe obligations will become as unfixed and as fluctuating in their minds, as general and abſtract ideas uſually are? Is it not to be apprehended, that they will never condeſcend to reaſon à poſteriori, and from the actual conſtitution of things, up to the will of GOD and the duty of man; the conſequence of which would be to eſtabliſh a rule of judgment concerning the great principles of moral obligations, as invariable as the obligations themſelves?

THESE metaphyſical divines are, for this reaſon, the more to be condemned, that, whilſt they pretend to knowledge, that neither men nor angels, I preſume, are capable of having, knowledge of divine ideas, and of the rule by which infinite wiſdom governs, and whilſt they would entice us by learned language, vague expreſſions, and falſe airs of demonſtration, to ſeek the laws of our nature out of the ſcene of our nature, and beyond the reach of any clear conceptions we are able

able to have; this very law is enacted in all the works of God, promulgated in terms the moſt proportionable to human conception, and writ in characters ſo plain, that he who runs may read them.

The great principles of moral truth are as much founded in the nature of things, as thoſe of mathematical truth: and it is not a little leſs abſurd to contradict the former by our words or actions, than to deny the latter. If the latter of theſe have an advantage in this reſpect, that the demonſtrations of them are carried on with greater ſteadineſs and preciſion, by the immediate and joint aſſiſtance of ſenſe and intellect; the former have an advantage, for ſuch it may be reckoned, of another kind. We perceive the truth of both with equal evidence; but as the former are much more important to us than the latter, we may be ignorant of all mathematical, we cannot be ſo of all moral truth. We diſcover one, the other diſcovers itſelf: it obtrudes itſelf on the mind, and the mind perceives it with greater ſatisfaction. He who demonſtrates that the three angles of a triangle are equal to two right angles, or that a ſquare is double to a triangle of equal baſe and height, has a dry inward complacency. But he who contemplates the obvious advantages of benevolence and juſtice to ſociety, and of ſociety to mankind, will feel a pleaſure much more ſenſible: and the ſame proportion will hold in all the progreſs the mind makes to diſcover mathematical, and moral truth.

III.

If any man ſhould advance, that we ought to proceed on the known principles of mathematics, not becauſe there are ſuch in nature, but becauſe mathematicians have made an

agreement or compact to proceed upon them as if there were such, I suspect that he would be esteemed mad. What then was HOBBES, his predecessors, and his successors, who affirmed that all distinction between moral good and evil, just and unjust, is established solely by civil institution; and that our moral obligations are derived from the laws of society, not from the law of nature? This extravagant system has been over and over refuted by many writers of our own and other countries. Some reflections, such as my first thoughts suggest to me, I too will bestow upon it. They shall not be long, and whether they are new or no, they shall not be copied from any one. It seems then to me, that civil societies could not have been formed, nor the distinction of just and unjust, nor the honestum and decorum of life have been established, if there had not been, antecedently, such a law of nature as HOBBES denies, and directly opposite to that which he supposes. Your great predecessors, AMPHION and ORPHEUS, would have strung their lyres to little purpose, if there had not been a corresponding unison in the human constitution. The letter of the fable would have proved true, as soon as the moral of it; stones would have leaped into order, and have builded themselves into walls; tygers and wolves would have grown tame, and have formed peaceful societies, as soon as men, if there had not been a law of nature peculiar to man: there was therefore such a law. We may consider man, in a state of nature, as an artless, but we must consider him, in no state, as an irrational creature: and to have been such a creature as HOBBES represents him, he must have been rather irrational than artless. The proof that this philosopher brings to shew that man is made by discipline, that is, the discipline of civil or political government, and not by nature, fit for society, is a strange one indeed. He says, that "Societies are confede-"racies," which is true in a proper sense: "That the force of

"the

" the conventions by which they are framed is unknown to " children and illiterate people, and the utility of them to " thoſe who never experienced the evils that ariſe from the " want of ſociety . . . . . that it is manifeſt therefore (all men " being born children) that all men are born unfit for ſo- " ciety, and that many, perhaps the greateſt number, remain " ſome how or other unfit for it as long as they live; " that all theſe however, the adult as well as infants, have " the human nature;" and from hence he draws the concluſion I have mentioned. Now for thoſe who never experienced the evils that men are expoſed to out of ſociety, it is enough to ſay that they feel, and muſt feel, without the help of this contraſt, unleſs they are idiots, the benefits of ſociety; and for the reſt, his argument is no better than this would be: All men are born infants, infants have not the uſe of ſpeech, ſome men are born dumb, and have it not during their whole lives; men are therefore by their nature incapable, or unfit to ſpeak. If men were at any time, for years or ages, in that ſtate of war and confuſion which HOBBES aſſumes to be their natural ſtate, it would not follow that every one had, by nature, a right to do what every one had, by particular circumſtances and contingency of events, the power to do. It would only follow, that inſtinct determines ſooner, and appetite and paſſion more ſtrongly, than reaſon. It would only follow, that the ſpring of human nature exerted its force, before the balance, which is deſigned to controul and regulate the impulſes of it, was put into activity, as it muſt be, according to the ſame nature, by time and experience. But the caſe aſſumed has no pretence to be admitted; neither is it poſſible to conceive, on any ſuppoſition, ſuch a ſtate of mankind as the philoſopher of Malmeſbury had figured to himſelf. However you ſuppoſe the human race to have begun, ſocieties, little indeed, but ſocieties ſtill, muſt

have been co-eval with it. If there was a firſt man and a firſt woman, they and their children (for theſe could not nurſe and educate themſelves) muſt have conſtituted a firſt ſociety. If numbers of men and women ſprung out of the earth at once, there might be ſome conteſts among the men about theſe primitive ladies, and ſome violence might be employed, and ſome confuſion might ariſe, in the immediate hurry of copulation. But after that, the ſame inſtinct, which had cauſed variance, would have formed ſocieties. Families would have been ſoon raiſed, and the authority, ſubordination, order, and union, neceſſary to their well being, muſt have followed naturally, as we may obſerve that they do among the moſt ſavage people. Men never were, becauſe they could never ſubſiſt, in a ſtate of abſolute individuality. Self-love, directed by inſtinct to mutual pleaſure, made the union of man and woman. Self-love made that of parents and children. Self-love begat ſociability; and reaſon, a principle of human nature, as well as inſtinct, improved it. Reaſon improved it, extended it to relations more remote, and united ſeveral families into one community, as inſtinct had united ſeveral individuals into one family. Reaſon performed this by the help of experience: and what is the effect of experience? It is not to make any thing new in nature, it is to diſcover what was in nature, tho' unobſerved before. We might ſay as truly that Columbus diſcovered a new world, in the abſolute as well as relative ſenſe of the word, as to ſay with Hobbes, that when men diſtinguiſhed between juſt and unjuſt, and made laws and inſtitutions on that diſtinction, they made that to be juſt or unjuſt which was indifferent before. The natural obligation to exerciſe benevolence, to adminiſter juſtice, and to keep compacts, is as evident to human reaſon, as the deſire of happineſs is agreeable to human inſtinct. We deſire by inſtinct, we acquire by reaſon. The natural deſire leads us neceſſarily

to

to the natural obligation: and we proceed, in this caſe, from intuitive to demonſtrative knowledge, by the ſame ſure ſteps, by which we proceed from the knowledge of our own, to that of GOD's exiſtence. The law of nature, or of right reaſon, is the real original of all poſitive laws. Such it appeared to TULLY [a]. "Ergo eſt lex," ſays he, "juſtorum injuſ-"torumque diſtinctio ad illam antiquiſſimam et rerum omni-"um principem expreſſa naturam, ad quam leges hominum "diriguntur." As the civil laws derive their authority from a conformity to this original, ſo it is their real, or ſuppoſed tendency to the ſame end that induces men to ſubmit to them. TULLY [b] ſhall ſupport my opinion again. It is certain, according to him, that they who gave laws to mankind "po-"pulis oſtendiſſe ſe ea ſcripturos atque laturos, quibus illi ad-"ſcriptis ſuſceptiſque honeſtè beatèque viverent *.

LET

[a] De Leg. Lib. ii. [b] Ibid.

* Tho' I would not take TULLY for my guide in matters of the firſt philoſophy, yet his opinions are often true, and his authority is always of weight, if not to determine, yet to confirm us, on ſuch ſubjects as theſe. It does ſo very reaſonably in the notions that are advanced, and implied in this paragraph. They who aſſume that the will of a ſuperior can alone conſtitute obligation, do really trifle, and miſtake too groſly; ſince not only a moral obligation may exiſt without a law, but a law may be ſuch as to create no moral obligation. When we ſpeak of moral obligations, either we mean nothing, or we mean that we are tied, bound, and under an internal, that is, a moral neceſſity of conforming ourſelves to thoſe rules which are expreſſed in the conſtitution of our nature, and on the obſervation of which the happineſs of our kind depends. Reaſon is in this caſe the obliger. A rational creature is the obliged; and he is ſo obliged as no law, made by mere will, can of itſelf oblige. The mere will of a legiſlator may conſtrain, may force, may create an outward, a phyſical neceſſity, but this neceſſity implies no obligation; and if king lords and commons had enacted, that when parents lived to the age of fourſcore their children ſhould put them to death, you would not have thought yourſelf under an obligation of putting your old mother to death. In ſhort, human laws are in a firſt conſideration nothing more than the dictates of will, the will of a legiſlator, enforced by ſuperior power; and in a ſecond, they may acquire, or not acquire, the right

Let it not be ſaid, that men have been ſometimes ſeduced, and ſometimes forced to receive the will of other men for law; that this has been done without any regard to the law of nature, and might have been done juſt as effectually on the ſuppoſition of no ſuch law. Reaſon will tell us, that it cannot, and experience that it has not been ſo done, whatever appearances may have ſtruck thoſe who do not look far enough back to the cauſes of things. Men are not attracted by ſounds or odors, nor hived like bees; and, far from ſubmitting to civil laws made by mere will, they have ſubmitted to theſe, that they might not be governed by mere will. That fraud and force hold men in ſubjection, I do not deny, the firſt principally to eccleſiaſtical, and both to civil tyranny. But this I deny, that fraud and force were ſufficient of themſelves, and the true, ſole, and original means of ſubmitting men to ſuch tyranny.

I shall not ſpeak here of religious tyranny, the firſt, and, with reſpect to the authority it prophanes, the moſt audacious offspring of fraud. Enough has been ſaid on that ſubject in another Eſſay. Here I confine myſelf to civil inſtitutions and civil government alone, and I reſt aſtoniſhed at the ſtrange perverſion of reaſon in thoſe men, who make the abuſe of natural law, as far as they can, paſs for the original of all law. Could the fraud, or, if you will ſoften the

right of obliging, as they have the power of forcing. But this order is inverted in the divine law of nature. The moral neceſſity of acting agreeably to it, in order to ſecure that happineſs which we are determined irreſiſtibly to deſire, is a firſt conſideration, and is alone ſufficient to create obligation. In diſcovering this law we are led to diſcover the legiſlator, and will is added to inveſt obligation with all the forms of law, the will of that Being who conſtituted the obligation when he made the human ſyſtem, and who, by conſtituting the obligation, made and promulgated the law.

terms,

terms, the art of legiſlators have impoſed originally for laws the dictates of mere will? Certainly not. Mere will would have revolted mankind from them, if it had appeared to be ſuch: and it would have appeared to be ſuch, if there had not been, in the nature of things and in the reaſon of man, a law which ſometimes gave, and always ſeemed to give a ſanction to their laws. What therefore could fraud do, or has fraud done, in this reſpect? Nothing more than this. When reaſon and experience determined men to walk in thoſe paths which the law of nature points out, and which lead to the happineſs of their kind; fraud, like an unfaithful guide, led them inſenſibly into others. Nature directed them to unite in ſocieties, and to ſubmit to civil laws, for their common utility. Fraud betrayed them into the tyranny of mere will, and when various inſtitutions and various cuſtoms had made them loſe ſight of the law of their nature, it was not hard to perſuade them that the dictates of will, deſigned for particular not common utility, and even repugnant to this law, were deduced from it. Thus again, as to force. When abſolute power is once eſtabliſhed, it may impoſe arbitrary will for law. It cannot make things juſt or unjuſt, nor create natures, that exiſted before government itſelf. But as they were ill obſerved then, they may be ill defined now, in particular inſtances. The unjuſt may paſs for what it is in ſome caſes, and be decreed juſt in others: and thus, civil laws, not only may, but do very frequently, confound the diſtinction that nature has made, the very diſtinction which is ſo falſely aſcribed to their ſole authority. But whatever abſolute power does when it is eſtabliſhed, how could it be eſtabliſhed originally, and in a ſtate of nature like that which is ſuppoſed? Abſolute power muſt have been acquired by ſuperior force, and ſuperior force by ſuperior numbers. Still the queſtion will return, how were theſe ſuperior numbers collect-

ed in one intereſt, and under one direction? They could not be ſo originally by force; for force ſuppoſes them, and is derived from them. HERCULES might have travelled with his club in his hand, from the eaſt to the weſt: his club might have deſtroyed here and there a monſter, but would have formed a ſociety no where. Nothing but conſent can form originally collective bodies of men. Nothing but conſent, therefore, to which men are determined by the ſociability of their nature, by an antecedent law, could have raiſed an army, or created that force by which it is aſſumed that all laws, thoſe we call civil and thoſe we call natural, were alike impoſed on mankind.

ON the whole, as faſt as families united in larger ſocieties, and the ſame plain and ſimple rules, the firſt rudiments of natural law, that had been ſufficient under paternal government, were ſo no longer, but required greater extenſion and a greater variety of application. Philoſophers and legiſlators aroſe, conſtituted governments, and made laws wiſely and unwiſely, agreeably and diſagreeably to the nature of things, according to the general imperfection of human productions: but there would have been no ſocieties to whom laws might be given, no pretence to give them, no diſpoſition to receive them, if there had not been a primaeval law, a law by which the families of men were governed in that ſtate which we commonly call a ſtate of nature, and which laid the principles of future government in another ſtate, to which they were advancing gradually. This primaeval law is that code wherein all the laws, to which GOD has ſubjected his human creatures, are contained. Civil laws are the gloſſes which ſometimes explain and ſometimes perplex it, which men make, and men may alter at their will; whilſt the other remains immutable like that of GOD. HOBBES ſeems to admit this

primaeval law, and to give up his own doctrine in that place of his book "de cive," where he ſpeaks to this effect, for I quote here upon my memory, "that men were obliged to "enter into compacts to preſerve one another, and to ſeek "peace wherever it could be had, in order to prevent the "miſchief and deſolation which would attend his imaginary "ſtate of nature." Now if ſome things were fit to be prevented, ſome things were unfit to be done, in the ſuppoſed ſtate of nature; from whence it follows, that the diſtinction between juſt and unjuſt was made before governments were inſtituted, or legiſlators made it, which the ſame Mr. HOBBES denies.

I CONCLUDE my reflections by obſerving, that the whole hypotheſis ſeems to be raiſed on three great miſtakes. It conſiders man, in the ſtate of nature, under the direction of his appetites alone, and going out of that ſtate as ſoon as he begins to exerciſe his reaſon; altho' HOBBES ſays, inconſiſtently enough on ſome occaſions, that right reaſon is the rule of human actions, even antecedently to civil laws. But to think rightly of man in this very ſtate, we ought to conſider him under the actual direction of all his natural faculties, of his reaſon as well as his appetites, of his reaſon artleſs indeed and untutored by experience, but therefore undebauched likewiſe, and in all caſes ſufficient to demonſtrate to him the firſt general and obvious principles on which the happineſs of his kind is builded, and to which he is plainly and ſtrongly directed by the neceſſities of his nature. In the next place, this hypotheſis conſiders each man as an individual, no more a member of the great commonwealth of mankind than of any particular commonwealth, it ſuppoſes him to have a right to every thing, and to be a rival and enemy on that account to every other man; whereas it is not more evident that we are born

to walk with our legs, and to handle things with our hands, than it is that we are born to aſſiſt, and to be aſſiſted by one another. It is not more plain that each man cannot enjoy every thing, than it is that each man has not an unlimited right to enjoy every thing, or that the right of each man, where things are common, is limited by his real wants. It did not require more ſagacity to diſcover theſe truths in a ſtate of nature, than it did to reaſon and to act as unnaturally as mankind muſt have done in a perpetual round of jealouſy, precaution, and deſign, according to their plan of life, ſuch as HOBBES had imagined it. In the next and laſt place, this hypotheſis confounds the ideas of original laws, and of laws made to explain and renew theſe. It does this unneceſſarily too, unleſs we ſuppoſe this philoſopher to have been ſo abſolutely an atheiſt, that he was forced by his ſyſtem to aſcribe the obligation of all law to man and not to GOD: for nothing can be better founded, nor more conſequential, in the reaſon of all thoſe who acknowledge ſuch a being than this opinion, that the author of all nature, having given to his different creatures different natures, according to the different purpoſes for which they were deſigned in the ſcheme of his providence, and every one of theſe natures including it's own peculiar law, whether that of inſtinct or that of reaſon, the moſt rational of his human creatures eſtabliſhed from time to time rules of conduct and government conformable to it, and which are in particular inſtances ſo many republications of it. To uſe an obvious and familiar example; the ſame rights of Engliſhmen, which were ſettled by the great charter, have been enacted over again by many particular laws. Would Mr. HOBBES have dated theſe rights, if he had admitted them, from theſe later laws? He would not moſt certainly.

To

To conclude therefore, nothing of this kind can deſerve our attention more, becauſe nothing can contribute more to keep us within the golden mean of truth, than to obſerve the ſtrange extremes into which philoſophers are carried, by preſumption, by an affectation of ſingularity, and by other motives, little leſs inexcuſable, tho' in appearance more plauſible. Thus they are carried, in the inſtance before us, ſome to ſet the principles of morality out of our ſight and their own too, whilſt they aſſume them to be derived from eternal natures, independent on the will of GOD; ſome, to lay theſe principles as much too low, as low as the level of human policy, whilſt they aſſume them to be nominal natures, dependent on the will of man; ſome, to inſiſt that GOD wills we ſhould follow, in our moral conduct, the ſame eternal rule which he follows himſelf, in the government of the univerſe; and ſome, to affirm, that far from having any rule at all, every thing is indifferent in it's nature, and man by nature a lawleſs ſavage.

IV.

AFTER cenſuring theſe extremes, it becomes proper to enquire, a little more particularly, what the truth is which lies between them, how the laws of nature develope themſelves to the human underſtanding, how ſelf-love leads to ſociability, and the moſt confined principle extends itſelf to be that which connects the whole race of mankind. But before I ſay any thing further on theſe ſubjects, I muſt give ſome anſwer to a query which our good friend the B. of C. makes. The query is this, "Whether there is any abſurdity in ſuppoſ-" ing that man ſhould imitate the author of nature, ſo far " as he is able? This is ſaid to be "not only agreeable to " the

" the chriſtian plan, but alſo to that of the Stoics." See Balbus, in Tully de Nat. Deorum.

In anſwer to this query I confeſs, and think myſelf obliged in conſcience to confeſs, that I hold it to be abſurd, and worſe than abſurd to aſſert, that man can imitate God, except in a ſenſe ſo very remote, and ſo improper, that the expreſſion ſhould never be uſed, and much leſs ſuch a duty be recommended. Divines have diſtinguiſhed, in their bold analyſes, between God's phyſical and his moral attributes, for which diſtinction, tho' I ſee ſeveral theological, I do not ſee one religious purpoſe that it is neceſſary to anſwer. But the diſtinction once made by their ſupreme authority, tho' they admit that we cannot imitate God in the exerciſe of the former, they inſiſt that we can, and ought to imitate him in the exerciſe of the latter; and to compleat this proof, that conſiſts of affirmation rather than argument, they maintain, at leaſt Clarke * does ſo very peremptorily, that the divine moral attributes, that is, holineſs, goodneſs, juſtice, righteouſneſs, and truth, are the very ſame in God as they are in our ideas. Nay, he adds, that God, out of a tender and hearty concern for the happineſs of man, (ſtrange words to be applied to the Supreme Being!) deſires to be imitated by him in thoſe perfections, which are the foundation of his own unchangeable happineſs.

When they diſtinguiſh thus between the phyſical and moral attributes, it is plain that they ſee how abſurd they would appear, if they propoſed to creatures, conſcious of their corporeal and mental weakneſs, to imitate, even ſo far as they are able or in any degree, infinite power and wiſdom; which

* Evid. p. 116.

would

would be a ridiculous mimickry, not a real imitation. When they propoſe this imitation of the moral attributes, they flatter themſelves that the ridicule will be leſs liable to obſervation. Theſe attributes are leſs ſo, and they can make, by the help of their precarious metaphyſical and logical reaſonings, ſuch repreſentations of them as may ſeem to render them imitable by man. But they would do well to conſider, that if the moral attributes were demonſtrated by arguments à priori, and they are not ſo even by them, to be the ſame in GOD as they are in our ideas, yet this general aſſurance would be far from making them objects of human imitation. To be ſuch, they muſt be known à poſteriori, like his phyſical attributes; for we can have no knowledge of either, except that which ſenſe and experience give us. They muſt be diſcerned in the works of GOD, and in the conduct of his providence; and it is evident that they are not, cannot be ſo diſcerned in them as to be proper objects of our imitation. The divine attributes are exerciſed in ſuch innumerable relations abſolutely unknown to us, that tho' we are ſure the exerciſe of them, in the immenſity of the univerſe, is always directed by the all-perfect Being to that which is fitteſt to be done on the whole; yet the notions of created beings who ſee them in one relation alone, like us, cannot be applied to them with any propriety, nor with any certainty ſufficient to make them objects of their imitation. This is ſo true, that in many caſes we ſhould act in direct contradiction to the law of our nature, if we made the conduct of divine providence the rule of ours. GOD makes his ſun to riſe upon the evil and the good, and he ſends rain on the juſt and the unjuſt. He involves the innocent with the guilty in great calamities: and there is no theme on which divines enlarge more pathetically than on the unjuſt diſtribution of good and evil, when they join with the atheiſts, tho' for different purpoſes, in one common cry. Are

Are theſe appearances, however conſtant ſome, and however frequent others of them may be, to ſtand as objects that we are to imitate in our moral conduct? I think no man will ſay that they are, except thoſe who have ſo little regard to conſiſtency that they propoſe the firſt to our imitation, whilſt they aggravate the two laſt to ſuch a degree, that they aſſume the juſtice and goodneſs of God's diſpenſations, in this ſyſtem, to be capable of no other vindication than that which ſuppoſes another. Theſe writers and preachers therefore muſt mean, when they exhort us to imitate God, not the God whom we ſee in his works, and in all that his providence orders or permits, but the God who appears in their repreſentations of him, and who is often ſuch a God as no pious theiſt can acknowledge.

When Balbus, ſince Balbus is cited on this occaſion, endeavors to prove the world a wiſe being and a God, he ſays, ſpeaking after Chrysippus, "ipſe autem homo ortus eſt ad "mundum contemplandum & imitandum." He is born to do this, ſo far as he is able; for the world is perfect, and he is only "quædam particula perfecti." He has only a participation, our divines would ſay, of the divine perfections. Further on, the ſame Balbus, being to prove that the world is governed by the providence of the gods, aſſumes that the gods muſt be "non ſolùm animantes ſed etiam rationis "compotes," and that they muſt live together in a ſort of civil ſociety, governing the world like one common republic or city. From hence it follows, he ſays, that there is the ſame reaſon, the ſame truth, and the ſame law of right and wrong "utrobique," both in God and man. The wiſdom, the reaſon, the prudence of the gods are greater indeed, tho' of the ſame kind; and ſince theſe are employed by them in "maximis & optimis rebus," they muſt be employed of neceſſity

ceſſity in the government of the world; becauſe nothing can be greater nor better than the world, " nec majus, nec melius " mundo." Theſe are all the paſſages I recollect, where BALBUS ſpeaks of any thing pertinent to the preſent queſtion; and I cannot find any thing in them that is favorable to the doctrine taught by platonic and chriſtian divines, about our obligation to imitate GOD. I am ſorry to find too, that this doctrine is more extravagant than the extravagancies of the ſtoics. To maintain, that the material world is a divine animal, a wiſe being, and a god, is blaſphemous and abſurd. But to ſay, that man is born to contemplate, and imitate the world, may admit of a very good ſenſe, with a little interpretation; ſince it may be made to ſignify, what it would be better to expreſs plainly, that man is born to contemplate the world, and to conform his behaviour to the will of GOD, that is manifeſted, relatively to man, in the conſtitution of it. Thus the doctrine of BALBUS may receive a reaſonable interpretation, which, I am ſure, that of CLARKE and other chriſtian divines cannot; and, beſides, it will afford as much pathetic matter " per la predica" with the advantage of being true, as the other, which, however piouſly intended or heard, is falſe and prophane.

THE man, who neglects the duties of natural religion and the obligations of morality, acts againſt his nature, and lives in open defiance to the author of it. GOD declares for one order of things, he for another. GOD blends together the duty and intereſt of his creature; his creature ſeparates them, deſpiſes the duty, and propoſes to himſelf another intereſt. He, who acts in a conformity to the nature of things, carries on the ſyſtem of GOD, and co-operates with him: and ſurely to put the ſyſtem of divine wiſdom in execution, and to co-operate with the creator, is honor enough for the creature.

Thus we may attain to the perfection of our nature, and, by pretending to no more, we may do it real honor: whereas, by aſſuming that we imitate GOD, we give the ſtrongeſt proof of the imperfection of our nature, whilſt we neglect the real, and aſpire vainly at a mock honor; as pride, ſeduced by adulation, is prone to do; and as religious pride, wrought up by ſelf-conceit into enthuſiaſm, does above all others. They who encourage and flatter this pride, like CLARKE, are a ſort of eunomians, and boaſt, like the founder of that ſect, and the faſt friend of the arians, that they know GOD as well as he knows himſelf.

HEATHEN divines were very far from having the ſame preſumption. The gods they pretended to know were inmates in one great houſe with men, or fellow citizens of one great city. Such gods they might pretend to know, and to imitate too. But we ſhall not find that thoſe of them, who acknowledged, beſides theſe inferior generated gods, one ſupreme ungenerated Being, preſumed to claim any ſuch intimate acquaintance with him. On the contrary, they ſuppoſed him to be above all human conception, and therefore above all human imitation. He did not ſtand, in their ideas of him, even in the relation to man of creator or governor, except he might be ſaid to ſtand mediately, through theſe inferior divinities, in that relation: and thus we have another inſtance of the ſtrange extremes into which philoſophers run. Theſe extremes would be avoided, if they could content themſelves to know GOD, as he has thought fit to be known by them: and why are they not, divines eſpecially, ſo content? He appears in his works, and by eaſy deductions from our knowledge of them, to be the firſt, ſelf-exiſtent, intelligent cauſe of all things, a Being of infinite wiſdom and power, and therefore an object, to all rational creatures, not of curioſity but of

awe, of reverence, of adoration, of gratitude, of obedience, and reſignation. To what purpoſe then do divines contend to make him an object of human imitation, by deductions from his nature and attributes, independently of his works, by which alone they can have the little, inadequate, general, but ſufficient, knowledge of his nature and attributes that has been mentioned? Do they hope to carry theiſm, and the obligations of natural religion further, by nice metaphyſical ſpeculations, hard to underſtand, and inconcluſive when they are underſtood, than by thoſe obvious proofs which God has proportioned to the comprehenſion of every man? I conclude therefore my anſwer to this query, by aſking, in my turn, our excellent friend, whether the doctrine of imitating God, even ſo far as we are able, does not tend to draw men off unneceſſarily, and, if I may ſay ſo, wantonly, from real knowledge, into thoſe abſtractions that have led ſo many to confound the divine and the human nature, to imagine an uninterrupted ſcale of intelligence from man up to God, to flatter themſelves with notions, not only of imitating him, but of being united to him, and to invent or adopt, in the licentiouſneſs of imagination, all that metaphyſical and myſtical blaſphemy which has paſſed for the moſt ſublime theology.

V.

WHAT has been ſaid in anſwer to the query about imitating God, is not remote from the ſubject we are upon, tho' it may ſeem a digreſſion, ſince it tends to lay the principles of natural law on their true foundation. All that can be ſaid, to any real and uſeful purpoſe, concerning this law, is extremely plain. It lies too in a very narrow compaſs: and yet what volumes have been written, what diſputes have ariſen, about

it; whilſt men have been, as authors are commonly, much more intent to ſhew their learning or acuteneſs, than to ſet their ſubject in a clear and ſufficient light. A ſuperfluous glare not only tires, but offuſques, the intellectual ſight; and of this there are examples to be found. But the writers I ſpeak of here, ſeem oftener to do like the ſchoolmen, of whom my lord BACON ſays very wittily and juſtly, that inſtead of ſetting up a light ſufficient to enlighten a large room, they go about with a ſmall taper, and, whilſt they illuminate one corner, darken the reſt. He ſays very truly, that they break the ſolidity of ſcience by the minuteneſs of their queſtions; and, we may add as truly, that the learned perſons I intend here, of both ſorts, puzzle and perplex the plaineſt thing in the world; ſometimes by citations little to the purpoſe, or of little authority; ſometimes by a great apparatus of abſtract reaſoning, and by dint of explanation. Read SELDEN, read GROTIUS, read CUMBERLAND, read PUFFENDORF, to mention no others, if you have leiſure and patience for it: and after you have done ſo, I will appeal to you for the truth of the judgment I make. There are many curious reſearches, no doubt, and many excellent obſervations in theſe writers; but they ſeem to be great writers on this ſubject by much the ſame right, as he might be called a great traveller, who ſhould go from London to Paris by the Cape of Good Hope.

AMONG all the trifling queſtions, that have been raiſed concerning the law of nature, none is more trifling than the cavil made at the very expreſſion. It is futile and pedantic, and would not deſerve of itſelf even the little notice that I have taken of it occaſionally. But the ill conſequence of admitting it, with reſpect to the original and univerſal obligation of the law, makes it deſerve refutation. HOBBES uſed the term, tho' he denied the thing. His point of view was to

derive all law from the authority of the civil magiſtrate; and therefore, tho' he acknowledged right reaſon to be the rule, he would not allow it to be the law, of human actions. But the inſtances he brings in proof are nothing to the purpoſe. The laws of nature, taught by philoſophers in their writings, are not therefore written laws, nor are the writings of lawyers ſuch, for want of a ſupreme authority, "ob defectum auctoritatis "ſummæ." No doubt they are not. But if they are conformable to the nature of things, they have an authority ſuperior to HOBBES's ſupreme authority. Tho' philoſophers and lawyers collected them, GOD made them, and civil laws themſelves have no real, no intrinſical authority diſtinct from this. Nay, an avowed atheiſt might indulge us in the uſe of this term, like HOBBES, whether he was one or no, tho' ſome divines will not; for the rule of right reaſon muſt appear evident to him, if he reflects at all on the nature of things, and not the rule alone, but the happineſs or unhappineſs of mankind, conſequent to the obſervation or the breach of it: all which together, he muſt own, would amount to a law, if he could bring himſelf to acknowledge a law-giver; and comes very near it, however, in a large but proper ſenſe. How ſhould it not, when we collect this double ſanction from the ſame nature from whence we collect the rule?

SELDEN, much more orthodox than HOBBES, in his firſt book "De Jure Nat. et Gent. juxta Diſ. Ebræor. where he treats this matter with that profuſion of learning which he pours forth on every occaſion, agrees that the principles of natural law were diſcovered by the right uſe of reaſon. But, after this, he endeavors to ſhew, from the different and contrary placets of philoſophers, as well as inſtitutions of legiſlators, that reaſon cannot frame ſuch an uniform ſtated rule of right and wrong as this has been repreſented, nor much leſs a law without

out a legiſlative authority: and he concludes, as every theiſt muſt, and as the Jews did, that GOD, who made the law of nature, publiſhed it originally, and publiſhes it conſtantly to men. Now that GOD made the law, is certain; that he gave it, and ſtill gives it "perpetua indicatione," is no leſs certain; but the manner in which he gave, and continues to give it, according to the Jews, is very far from being ſo. It is a rhapſody of aſſumed fact, and of ſuperſtitious and enthuſiaſtical notions, common to them, to ſeveral heathen philoſophers, to chriſtian fathers, to ſcholaſtic divines, to mahometan doctors, and arabian metaphyſicians. To lay the foundation of the law of nature on ſuch vain hypotheſes, is to make the moſt important of human concerns ridiculous, the moſt diſtinct and cleareſt ideas confuſed and obſcure, and, in a word, to hinder us from ſeeing truth itſelf in a clear light.

GOD gave the law of nature, according to the rabinical doctrine, by word of mouth to ADAM firſt, and to NOAH afterwards: and the great principles of it were contained in the ſeven articles, that are called "ſeptem praecepta Noachidarum," by whom they mean not NOAH and his immediate offſpring alone, but the whole race of mankind. How the laſt of theſe laws "de membro animalis viventis "non comedendo," came to be given to ADAM, if it was not lawful to eat any fleſh, as they ſay it was not in the antediluvian world, is not eaſily explained. We may therefore ſuppoſe that they did not mean to include this article among the precepts given to ADAM, tho' an inconſiſtency never ſtopped the talmudiſts, and tho' the rabbins blunder daily through many that are as obvious as this. The diſtinction they make between themſelves and all other people, with reſpect to the divine communication of this law, is a little

little more intelligible. As they were deſcendants of NOAH, this law was given to them in common with all men; and ſince there was no written law before MOSES, their patriarchs themſelves could have no other moral law than this tradition. But then, as they were a choſen people, ſelected and ſeparated from the reſt of mankind, GOD gave them, by his ſervant MOSES, a peculiar law: and thus they ſtood diſtinguiſhed from the reſt of the Noachidæ, whom they called the Nations; as the Greeks had the folly to call every man a barbarian who was not a Greek, and as even the modern Italians, to ſay nothing of the old Romans, have ſometimes given the ſame appellation even to the moſt civilized of their neighbours.

ANOTHER way, by which, according to the ſame rabinical doctrine, the law of nature was and is communicated to man by GOD, is that of immediate or mediate inſpiration, in oppoſition to mere rational faculties and operations. I call it inſpiration, becauſe the Jews imagined an "intellectus agens," or active ſpirit, by the influence or illumination of which, and in concurrence with which, the human underſtanding is made capable of knowing, not only the laws of nature, but all the other principles of ſcience, and deductions of reaſon, which are the objects of it. This "intellectus agens" is ſometimes, and to them, GOD himſelf, by a particular prerogative belonging to their nation, "ex prerogativâ gentis." To other men it is the miniſter of GOD, that illuminates their minds, like an intellectual ſun, by a force and with an authority derived from GOD. It was in the firſt way, no doubt, that ABRAHAM diſcovered by philoſophical meditation, in the midſt of idolatry, the exiſtence of the one true GOD: and, to ſay the truth, the Jews ſhould be, by virtue of this prerogative, the moſt enlightened and the moſt knowing people on earth; whereas

whereas they ſeem to have been in all ages the very reverſe; before their captivity, indocile and ignorant; after it, credulous and bigot, little curious of the real, much addicted to the imaginary ſciences that were cultivated by other nations.

THEY entertained the notion of this ſecond kind of inſpiration later than that of the firſt, "juxta diſciplinam recentiorem," ſays SELDEN: and it is no wonder that they did ſo. They had been uſed to think, that the divine preſence reſided amongſt them, and that they conſulted GOD by their high prieſt; that he ſpoke immediately to their prophets, and exerciſed his power immediately in the conduct of their affairs. But afterwards, tho' he was near them ſtill, he was not ſo near them; and mediate inſpiration to illuminate their minds became neceſſary. Beſides, it was not till after their captivity that a more refined philoſophy, and notions more metaphyſical than any they had had before, began to be introduced among them, whilſt they lived under the Seleucidæ and the Ptolemys, in ages when the firſt philoſophy was growing up to that pitch of enthuſiaſm and madneſs at which it arrived in the ſchool of Alexandria, and wherever the doctrines of the latter pythagoricians and platonicians prevailed. From hence, I ſuppoſe, it has happened, that this dogma of the rabbins bears ſo near a reſemblance to the opinions of the greek, and, in imitation of them, of the arabian metaphyſicians, who confounded together, with more difference of expreſſion than of meaning, if any of them can be ſaid properly to have had a meaning, the divine and human reaſon. But however all this may have been, the rabbins aſſert that the divine illuminating preſence, by which alone men are able to diſcover the law of nature, illuminated chiefly the deſcendants of SETH and of SEM, till the days in which the law was given by MOSES, when ſeven other prophets only aroſe

aroſe among the nations; and that from this æra the divine illumination has ſeldom ſhined on any perſons except themſelves. So that, on this hypotheſis, no great improvement has been made in the ſciences ſince the days of MOSES, except by the Jews.

I HAVE drawn this ſketch from SELDEN, in order to contraſt the extravagancy of the ſenotions, which are derived from a true principle, that the law of nature is the law of GOD, with thoſe of HOBBES, which are founded on this falſe principle, that the laws of nature are the laws of civil magiſtrates: and I conclude upon the whole, that we ſhall do much better to truſt ourſelves than ſuch maſters, who lead us into error about the origin of natural law, or about the means of arriving at the knowledge of it. One makes the origin independent on GOD, and ſome divines do little leſs. Another makes the means of arriving at the knowledge independent on man, and above the ſtrength of his natural reaſon; tho' the author of nature has been graciouſly pleaſed to proportion them one to the other. If theſe doctrines are hurtful in different reſpects, many words and much time are ſpent about others very little neceſſary, about abſtract notions of moral entities, and about the cauſes of moral truth, concerning which we may eaſily fall into error (whilſt we can fall into none concerning the great principles of it) unleſs we have the light of that nature to which our ſearch is directed. The philoſopher may, becauſe he does this; I had almoſt ſaid muſt; but the man of common ſenſe cannot err about theſe principles, tho' he may remain in ignorance about ſome of them, for want of induſtry or opportunity to diſcover them all.

VI.

LET us take things then as we find them, more curious to know what is, than to imagine what may be. Let us turn our eyes on ourſelves, and conſider how we are made. We ſhall not find either the immediate or mediate illumination, that is ſuppoſed to come to us from without, and independently on which it is ſuppoſed that the human mind can exerciſe no act of intelligence: but we ſhall find, that there is ſuch a thing as natural reaſon, implanted in us by the author of our nature, whoſe progreſs and operations are known to us intuitively, and by the help of which we are able to acquire, not only moral, but every other human ſcience.

EXPERIENCE and obſervation require time; and reaſon that collects from them, and is improved by them, comes ſlowly to our aſſiſtance. It would come too ſlowly, and want much of the power it has, weak and imperfect as that is, to regulate the conduct of human life, if the all-wiſe creator had not implanted in us another principle, that of ſelf-love, which is the original ſpring of human actions, under the direction of inſtinct firſt, and of reaſon afterwards. The firſt direction is common to all animals, even to thoſe that microſcopes alone can make viſible to the eye. The ſecond we ſay is peculiar to man, and ſo we may ſay properly enough, whether we conceive this faculty in man and beaſt to be wholly different in kind, or whether we conceive it to be vaſtly tranſcendent in man.

" Homo animans quidem eſt," GROTIUS ſpeaks*, " ſed exi-
" mium animans, multòque longiùs diſtans a cæteris omnibus,
" quam cæterorum genera inter ſe diſtant." I do not take this propoſition to be entirely true. It is impoſſible to obſerve the reſt of the animal kind, and not diſcern, in many of them, certain actions and rules of conduct that denote not only a more extenſive and ſurer inſtinct than we are conſcious of, but ſomething that appears rather a lower degree of reaſon, than a higher degree of inſtinct; if we are able by obſervation alone, and without any communication of their ideas, to diſtinguiſh ſo accurately. In all caſes, and in what manner ſoever it has been ordered by infinite wiſdom, there would be no difficulty in refuting, by particular facts, the general aſſertion of GROTIUS, nor in ſhewing that the difference in this reſpect, between ſome men and ſome other animals, is naturally leſs than that between different ſpecies of animals, and even between animals of one ſpecies, between man and man at leaſt. Superior beings, who look down on our intellectual ſyſtem, will not find, I perſuade myſelf, ſo great a diſtance between a Gaſcon petit maitre and a monkey, or a German philoſopher and an elephant, whatever partiality we may have for our own ſpecies, as they will find between thoſe men who are born to inſtruct, and thoſe who are born incapable of inſtruction. GROTIUS might have allowed other animals much more intelligence than he did; tho' he allows them in a note, and on the authority of PHILO and others, a little more than in his text. What the authorities of antient authors ſignify in a matter ſo notorious, and ſo much within the obſervation of every age, I know not. But I know ſtill leſs what he means, when he ſays, " quod in illis quidem pro-

* De Jure Bel. & Pac. Proleg.

" cedere credimus ex principio aliquo intelligente extrinſeco, " quia circa actus alios iſtis neutiquam difficiliores par in- " telligentia in illis non apparet." If he had ſaid from an inward principle, " ex principio intrinſeco," as he has been made to ſay in ſome editions, he would have been intelligible, and would have meaned very plainly a directing inſtinct, or a reaſoning faculty, much inferior to that of man, and variouſly implanted in the animal kind, to direct their actions to their different ends: but this would have been inconſiſtent with his argument, and he would have contradicted himſelf. He ſaid therefore " ex principio extrinſeco:" and what could he mean by that? An outward force that impels or reſtrains them, and directs their conduct occaſionally, but not uniformly? This would be too abſurd. Could he mean that immediate or mediate illumination from above, which the rabbins ſpeak of, and ſuppoſe that animals receive from thence the intelligence they want, in certain caſes, to fulfil the law of their nature; whilſt they are left deſtitute of any intelligence, in others? This would be ſtill more abſurd. Might it not be deemed prophane too among thoſe, who fear to proſtitute the divine action, as men who make hypotheſes in theology and philoſophy are apt to do?

The ſureſt way of avoiding ſuch abſurdities is to be neither dogmatical, nor even over curious: and there is the leſs temptation to be either, on this ſubject, becauſe the principles of the obligation of natural law, as far as we are concerned to know them, are extremely obvious. Inſtinct precedes reaſon in man. It ſupplies the want, or the imperfection of it in other animals. Should we venture to refine a little further on appearances, we might gueſs, that as the reaſon of man grows up out of habitual inſtinct, by experience and obſervation, ſo does that faculty,

culty, which I fear we muſt call by the ſame name in beaſts. Some of theſe have inſtinct and reaſon far above others; and man has reaſon far above them all: becauſe tho' they have ſenſes more acute than men very often, and ſeveral, perhaps, of which we have no ideas; yet the very contrary is true as to mental faculties, which are plainly leſs imperfect, and more numerous, in us than in them. They perceive ideas both ſimple and complex that come in by the ſenſes, and they retain them too, as we do. That they compare theſe ideas, in ſome degree, is certain. How far they compound them, by any intellectual operation, I much doubt. But this ſeems to be out of doubt, that they want totally the great inſtrument of human knowledge. I do not ſay abſtraction, which I take to be, as it is underſtood, a mere "ens "rationis," and to deny them which, is to deny them nothing; but I mean the wide-extended power of generaliſing the ideas they have, without which there can be no ratiocination, nor knowledge ſufficient to conſtitute moral agents.

As divines have impudently, and wickedly, aſſumed (give me leave to uſe on this occaſion, which deſerves it if any can, the ſtyle they employ on every diſpute) that there is a law of right reaſon common to God and man; ſo lawyers have advanced, moſt abſurdly, that the law of nature is common to man and beaſt. "Jus naturale eſt," ſay the compilers of the digeſt, "quod natura omnia "animalia docuit. Nam jus iſtud non humani generis "proprium, ſed omnium animalium, etc."

That the hiſtory and law of Moses is favorable to this opinion likewiſe, and that beaſts, as well as men, are repre-

repreſented and treated therein as accountable creatures, muſt not be denied, whatever ſhifts and evaſions commentators have invented. God is made to ſay, in the ixth chapter of Geneſis, ſpeaking to Noah and his children, "ſanguinem animarum veſtrarum requiram de manu "cunctarum beſtiarum, et de manu hominis, etc." The text is plain. Shall it be evaded by ſaying, on ſome rabinical authority, that the antediluvian tyrants kept wild beaſts to deſtroy men? and if they did ſo, who was to ſuffer, the tyrant or the beaſts? not the beaſt certainly, unleſs they had both the ſame law: and yet the beaſt was accountable by it, as well as the tyrant. Thus again, in the xiiith of Deuteronomy, God is made to ſay in the ſuppoſed caſe of idolatry..... "percuties habitatores urbis il-"lius in ore gladii, et delebis eam ac omnia quæ in "illa ſunt, uſque ad pecora." Will it be ſufficient to ſay that this order was given to ſhew the heinouſneſs of a crime, by the puniſhment of creatures who neither were nor could be guilty of it? Among the judgments denounced, in Leviticus, againſt thoſe who ſhould copulate with beaſts, the puniſhment is to be inflicted on the beaſt as well as on the man or woman. "Qui cum jumento & pecore "coierit morte moriatur: pecus quoque occidite. Mulier quæ "ſuccubuerit cuilibet jumento ſimul interficietur cum eo: "ſanguis eorum ſit ſuper eos." The Jews are ſaid to have diſpenſed with this puniſhment, when the boy was under nine, and the girl under three years of age; becauſe they did not ſuppoſe children ſo young to be capable of ſuch pollution. But was the beaſt that copulated with a man or a woman, at any age, capable of knowing the crime? Mr. Selden brings a paſſage or two out of the Miſna to ſhew that the beaſt was not put to death for ſinning againſt any law, but in order to blot out the memory of ſo great a ſcandal. He adds, that the

death of the beaſt was deemed a puniſhment on the owner, who ſhould have kept him with greater care; and from hence he concludes, "adeò ut pœnam ob jus aliquod violatum ad "beſtiam attinere neutiquam ullatenus admittant, nec jure "aliquo eam teneri." But it will not be hard to prove, from what Mr. SELDEN * himſelf admits in this very chapter, that the Jews made beaſts accountable, like moral agents, whatever their rabbins might pretend, to mitigate the abſurdity. The ſaducees brought ſome ſuch accuſation againſt them. MAIMONIDES anſwers it by denying that the beaſt, who had killed a man, was put to death, "ad pœnam ab illa exigen-"dam." He was put to death, "ad pœnam exigendam a "domino;" for it was not lawful to eat the goaring ox, after he had been ſtoned. But if this was ſo, how came the ox to eſcape when he had killed a gentile, and to be ſtoned irremiſſibly when he had killed a Jew? How came the ſame rule to be obſerved in the caſe of beſtiality? In ſhort, is it not plain, and would it not be allowed to be ſo, in the caſe of any other nation, that the Jews imagined the law of nature to be common to man and beaſt; that they underſtood and executed their own law accordingly, and that notwithſtanding the diſtinction made between the law of the gentiles and the law of the Jews, with reſpect to the puniſhment, they muſt have proceeded in the caſes here mentioned without any principle at all, or on this principle that beaſts are by nature accountable for crimes, and even able to diſcern between the greater crime and the leſs? I know nothing more abſurd than this, except a cuſtom or law at Athens, that was however leſs cruel. The weapons by which a murther had been committed were brought into court, as if they too were liable to puniſhment; and the ſtatue that had killed a man by it's

* Lib. i. c. 4.

fall,

fall, was, by a ſolemn ſentence of that wiſe people the Thaſii founded on a law of draco, caſt into the ſea.

THE principle of this juriſprudence cannot be reconciled to right reaſon. But the definition of the roman lawyers may be ſhewn to be rather too ſhort than falſe. As far as an inſtinct, common to all animals, directs the conduct of men, this inſtinct may be called the law of nature, and this law may be called the law of the whole kind. But in the human ſpecies, where inſtinct ceaſes, reaſon is given to direct; a ſecond table is added to the firſt, and both together compoſe the law of nature relatively to man. Inſtinct and reaſon may be conceived as different promulgations of the ſame law; one made of a part only by nature herſelf, immediately and univerſally; the other marked out by her in the whole extent of the law, and to be collected from theſe marks or notices by reaſon, which is right or wrong as it promulgates agreeably to them or not.

THERE is a ſort of genealogy of law, in which nature begets natural law, natural law ſociability, ſociability union of ſocieties by conſent, and this union by conſent the obligation of civil laws. When I make ſociability the daughter of natural law, and the granddaughter of nature, I mean plainly this. Self-love, the original ſpring of human actions, directs us neceſſarily to ſociability. The ſame determination of nature appears in other animals. They all herd with thoſe of their own ſpecies, with whom they ſympathiſe more; whoſe language, perhaps, whether it conſiſts in ſigns or ſounds, they underſtand better, and from whom if individuals do not receive much good, they may have leſs evil to apprehend. This inſtinct operates, at leaſt, as ſtrongly in man. I ſhall not contradict what TULLY

Tully ſays*, in his offices, that if we were not ſociable "propter neceſſitatem vitæ," on account of our mutual wants, if they were all ſupplied by providence and without any human help, "quaſi virgulâ divinâ," yet ſtill we ſhould fly abſolute ſolitude, and ſeek human converſation. I believe we ſhould. But even in this imaginary caſe, ſelf-love would be the determining principle ſtill. That friendſhips may be formed, and maintained, without any conſideration of utility, I agree, and hope I have proved. There is a ſort of intellectual ſympathy, better felt than expreſſed, in characters, by which particular men are ſometimes united ſooner, and more intimately, than they could be by mere eſteem, by expectation of good offices, or even by gratitude. I know not, to ſay it by the way, whether there is not a ſort of corporeal ſympathy too, without the ſuppoſition of which it is impoſſible to account for the ſtrong attachments which ſome men have had for the leaſt tempting and in all reſpects the leaſt deſerving women, and ſome women for the leaſt tempting and leaſt deſerving men.

But this is not the caſe of general ſociability. To account for that, we have no need to recur to occult qualities. Inſtinct leads us to it, by a ſenſe of pleaſure: and reaſon, that recalling the paſt, foreſees the future, confirms us in it, by a ſenſe of happineſs. Inſtinct is an inferior principle, and ſufficient for the inferior ends to which other animals are directed. Reaſon is a ſuperior principle, and ſufficient for the ſuperior ends to which mankind is directed. The neceſſities, the conveniencies of life, and every agreeable ſenſation, are the objects of both. But happineſs is a continued enjoyment of theſe, and that is an object proportioned to reaſon alone. Neither is obtained out of ſociety;

* CIC. Lib. 1. c.

and ſociability therefore is the foundation of human happineſs. Society cannot be maintained without benevolence, juſtice, and the other moral virtues. Theſe virtues, therefore, are the foundations of ſociety: and thus men are led, by a chain of neceſſary conſequences, from the inſtinctive to the rational law of nature, if I may ſpeak ſo. Self-love operates in all theſe ſtages. We love ourſelves, we love our families, we love the particular ſocieties, to which we belong, and our benevolence extends at laſt to the whole race of mankind. Like ſo many different vortices, the center of them all is ſelf-love, and that which is the moſt diſtant from it is the weakeſt.

THIS will appear to be in fact the true conſtitution of human nature. It is the intelligible plan of divine wiſdom. Man is able to underſtand it, and may be induced to follow it by the double motive of intereſt and duty. As to the firſt, real utility and right reaſon coincide. As to the laſt, ſince the author of our nature has determined us irreſiſtibly to deſire our own happineſs, and ſince he has conſtituted us ſo, that private good depends on the public, and the happineſs of every individual on the happineſs of ſociety, the practice of all the ſocial virtues, is the law of our nature, and made ſuch by the will of GOD, who, having determined the end and proportioned the means, has willed that we ſhould purſue one by the other. To think thus, is to think reaſonably of man and of the law of his nature, as well as humbly and reverently of the Supreme Being. But to talk, like CUMBERLAND, of promoting the good of the whole ſyſtem of rational agents, among whom GOD is included, and of human benevolence towards him, is to talk metaphyſical jargon and theological blaſphemy. He confeſſes that he uſes theſe expreſſions in an improper ſenſe, and explains, moſt unintelligibly, to any man who has right conceptions of the majeſty

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of the all perfect Being, what he means. His meaning, which he takes from TULLY, and which TULLY took from the stoicians, is expressed by the roman philosopher in the first book of his laws. He says there, that "nothing is more divine "than reason; that reason grown up to maturity and per-"fection is called wisdom; that nothing being better than this "reason, which is in man as well as in GOD, the first society "that man has is in this community of reason with GOD; "that from this community of reason there arises a commu-"nity of law, so that the whole world is to be deemed "one city or state, composed of gods and men.*" Much might be said to shew the absurdity and impertinence of such doctrines as these, and some reflections to this purpose have been made occasionally. But I content myself to observe here, how unnecessary these doctrines are to explain what the laws of nature are, and what the authority is by which they are made laws, even in the strictest sense of the word. We say, that the law of nature is the law of reason: and so it is in this sense, and thus far. A right use of this faculty, which GOD has given us, collects this law from the nature of things, as they stand in the system which he has constituted. Reason can look no higher, nor will right reason attempt it; for surely no disquisition can be more vain and needless than that which examines, whether actions are lawful or unlawful, "debiti aut illiciti," because they are commanded or forbid by GOD; or whether they are such "per se," independently on GOD, and therefore necessarily, "necessariò," commanded or forbidden by him. GROTIUS † adopts the last of these notions: and the general current of metaphysical refine-

* Quum adolevit atque perfecta est. . . . . Eaque et in homine et in Deo. Una civitas communis deorum atque hominum existimandus. CIC. de Legib.

† GROT. De jure Bel. & Pac. Lib. 1. c. 1.

ment runs that way. It assumes in man a community of reason with God, and then it seems consequential to assume, that men, such men at least as these reasoners imagine themselves to be, are able to discern natures and to judge of things antecedently to actual existence, and abstractedly from it; whereas perhaps, to think rightly, we must think that these natures and things, considered abstractedly from the manner and the relations in which they exist, are nothing better than imaginary entities, objects of ill chosen speculation not of knowledge. He who thinks thus will be apt to ask, what would become of justice, if we supposed a system wherein there was no property; or what of temperance, if we supposed one wherein there could be no excess? such questions, and many other objections, would not be easily answered: and the sole effect of this hypothesis must be, as I think it has been, to render our notions of natural laws disputable and indeterminable in many cases. This disquisition is therefore not only vain but hurtful. It is needless too, absolutely needless; for will any man deny, that however indifferent actions may be, "per se" and simply considered, they cease to be so when they are connected with a system, and cannot be separated not even in imagination from the relations they bear to other parts of the system, nor from their effects on the whole? the system to which we belong, like every other system, was made by the will of God, and therefore all the natures contained in it, both physical and moral, were ordained by the same will. It has been said with shocking impiety, by schoolmen and others, that if things were made as they are by the mere will of God, and not according to the essential differences and eternal independent natures of things, God might have made our obligations by the law of nature to be contrary to what they are. He might have made it our duty to blaspheme not to adore him,

and

and to exercise injustice not justice in our dealings with other men. But this is one instance, and not the least, of that habitual presumption which men contract in the schools of metaphysics and theology, where they are accustomed to reason about what infinite wisdom and power might, or should have done, instead of contenting themselves to know what they have done, and pronouncing it, for that reason, fittest to be done. In creating man, God designed to create not only a rational, but a social creature, and a moral agent: and he has framed his nature accordingly. If he had designed this world to be the habitation of devils, he might have made us by nature, what we say that they have made themselves by rebellion. But, as we ought not to presume to measure the divine perfections, nor the proceedings of infinite wisdom, by our scanty and precarious ideas, so it is worse than presumption to ascribe, even hypothetically, to the all-perfect Being any thing that is evidently repugnant to our ideas of perfection. Once more, therefore, let us be content to know things as God has been pleased to shew them to us, and to look no further than our nature for the law of it. In that, we shall find this law coeval with our system, if not with the author, and as immutable as the system, if not as immutable as God.

They who affect to carry their search further, fall into different absurdities. Some are intent on such abstractions, as have been mentioned, abstractions of eternal essences, intelligible independent natures, by which both natural and moral differences were constituted, before there was any natural or moral law, any natural or moral agents. Whilst these men pretend to consult the dictates of right reason, they leave reason no rule to go by. Every man assumes that his own is right: and ethics become as intricate, as uncertain, and as contentious a science, as theology. Whilst these men misapply and abuse

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their reaſon, there are thoſe who ſeem to have no want of it, in order to diſcover the law of nature. They affirm, that they have (and the ſole proof in this caſe, as in the caſe of abſtraction, is affirmation) a moral ſenſe, that is, an inſtinct by which they diſtinguiſh what is morally good from what is morally evil, and perceive an agreeable or diſagreeable intellectual ſenſation accordingly, without the trouble of obſervation and reflection. They bid fair to be enthuſiaſts in ethics, and to make natural religion as ridiculous, as ſome of their brothers have made revealed religion, by inſiſting on the doctrine of an inward light.

THE laſt of theſe wild men, that I ſhall mention, are ſuch as ANAXARCHUS, and our HOBBES. If the former had been guilty of nothing worſe than that which GROTIUS lays to his charge, he would have been leſs liable to cenſure than GROTIUS himſelf. This great lawyer and divine diſtinguiſhes between the law of nature, and the poſitive law of GOD, or man. By the laſt, he underſtands a law of will[a]. By the firſt, a dictate of right reaſon[b], that ſhews the moral turpitude[c], or the moral neceſſity there is in every action, that is, a ſuppoſed morality, or immorality independent on any poſitive law. Thus he diſtinguiſhes, and therefore blames ANAXARCHUS for ſpeaking too indiſtinctly[d] of law. But this diſtinction muſt not paſs for true. The law of nature, which he allows divine in one ſenſe, is in every ſenſe as much as any other a poſitive law of GOD, enacted as truly by the divine will, and promulgated by the divine authority not only as truly, but more evidently and more univerſally, as well as immutably. The fault of ANAXARCHUS lay here, that to flatter ALEXANDER, when he had

a) Jus voluntarium. b) Dictatum rectæ rationis.
c) Moralem turpitudinem, aut neceſſitatem moralem.
d) Nimium indiſtincté.

killed

killed CLITUS*, he attributed to this prince the power that the poets attributed to Jupiter, the power to make particular and even occasional rules of right and wrong by will. The fault of HOBBES lay here, he put the supreme Being out of the case entirely, ascribed no legislative authority or no exercise of it to him, assumed all actions to have been indifferent not only before our system was created, but even after it was so, and till the civil magistrate had made a difference between them, by commanding some, and by forbidding others.

MANY such general and fundamental absurdities as these are to be found in the writings even of those who have writ with the most applause on this subject; besides a multitude of particular questions, as frivolous as any that the schoolmen ever broached. I pass them all by with the neglect that they deserve, except one; some further notice of which is necessary to connect with what has been said, and to carry on my train of thoughts.

VII.

THE presumption of those, who pretend to deduce our moral obligations from the moral attributes of GOD, has so much theological authority on it's side, that the absurdity of it cannot be too often exposed and censured. There is fraud too, which I did not observe before, in this pretension; and fraud so manifest, that we may sometimes suspect it to be wilful. Instead of transferring from GOD to man, to use a phrase of CICERO, they transfer from man to GOD; and whilst they boast that man is made after the image

* PLUT. in ALEXAN.

of

of God, they make God after the image of man. What they preſent to us for a copy, is the original; and what they preſent for the original, is in reality the copy. Tho' we riſe from the knowledge of ourſelves, and of the other works of God, to a knowledge of his exiſtence and his wiſdom and power, which we call infinite, becauſe the ſenſible effects of them go far beyond our utmoſt conceptions of wiſdom and power, yet we cannot riſe thus to a knowledge of his manner of being, nor of his manner of producing thoſe effects which give us ideas of wiſdom and power; and as little, or leſs if poſſible, can we riſe from our moral obligations to his ſuppoſed moral attributes. I call them ſuppoſed, becauſe, after all that has been ſaid to prove a neceſſary connection between his phyſical and his moral attributes, the latter may be all obſerved in his wiſdom. It is even more agreeable to the phænomena, to believe that they are ſo, and that his wiſdom determining him to do always that which is fitteſt to be done upon the whole, of which fitneſs we are in no degree competent judges, the effects of it give us ſometimes ideas of thoſe moral qualities, which we acquire by reflection on ourſelves or by our dealings with one another, and ſometimes not. The works of God would give us ideas of wiſdom and power, if human actions and operations gave us none; and, in fact, the example of ſavage nations will ſhew, I think, that the firſt and ſtrongeſt impreſſions of this kind come from thence. But it is evident, that the firſt and ſtrongeſt impreſſions that we receive of benevolence, juſtice, and other moral virtues, come from reflection on ourſelves, and from our dealings with one another, from what we feel in ourſelves, and from what we obſerve in other men. Theſe we acknowledge to be, however limited and imperfect, the excellencies of our own nature, and therefore conceiving them without any limitations or imperfections, we aſcribe them to the di-

vine. We do worſe: we aſcribe our affections and paſſions to the divine nature. We make GOD ſo much a copy of man, that we deſign the worſt, as well as the beſt, of our own features, if I may ſay ſo, in our repreſentations of him: and as common as it is, no unprejudiced thinking man can hear, without aſtoniſhment, our perfections and our imperfections imputed to the Supreme Being, in the ſame breath, and by the ſame men; with this difference, at moſt, that the former are imputed directly, and the latter ſometimes under the thin and trite veil of analogy. In a being thus conſtituted, they may well imagine that the moral virtues are the ſame as they are in our ideas: and theology may eaſily deduce from his attributes, the characters theology has given them. But a being thus conſtituted is not the ſupreme, the all-perfect Being: and a very ſhort analyſe of the excellencies of our own nature will be ſufficient to ſhew, that they cannot be applied from man to GOD without prophaneneſs, nor from GOD to man without the moſt ſhameful abſurdity. Let me allude, on this occaſion, to a paſſage I have ſeen quoted from the ethics of ARISTOTLE. To what actions of the divinity can we apply, or from what can we deduce our notions of human juſtice? Both might be done, perhaps, by thoſe who aſſumed, like TULLY, a community of gods and men, or by thoſe who drew the divinity down to human converſations and human cares, to be immediately, and, as we may ſay, perſonally an actor in human affairs, to be a contracting party in covenants and alliances with men. Nay, ſomething of the ſame kind may be done by thoſe who acknowledge the infinite wiſdom of GOD, and yet include him in this ſyſtem of rational agents, every one of which is obliged to promote the good of the whole; who acknowledge the infinite diſtance between GOD and man, and yet aſſert that they may be compared together on account of their rationality, and be ſaid, not figuratively

but literally, to be of the ſame mind. But how ſhall we deduce fortitude from the attributes of God, or aſcribe this virtue to him who can endure no pain, nor be expoſed to any danger? How temperance, when it would be the moſt horrid blaſphemy to ſuppoſe him ſubject to any human appetites and paſſions, and much more to ſome ſo inordinate as to require a particular virtue to reſtrain and govern them? I might bring many more inſtances of the ſame kind. But theſe are enough: and he, who will not be convinced by theſe, how abſurdly the laws of nature are founded, by ſome writers, in the moral attributes of God, will be convinced by none.

But now, as abſurd as theſe doctrines are, we muſt not imagine that the law of nature wants any proofs of a divine ſanction, or a divine original. They are both contained in one: and the puniſhment, which attends the breach of this law, reſults, as neceſſarily as the law itſelf, from that nature which God has been pleaſed to conſtitute, according to his good pleaſure. Let it not be ſaid, that this puniſhment is only temporal, and the ſanction therefore inſufficient. Let not this be ſaid, particularly by thoſe men, who talk ſo much of a poſitive law given by God to his choſen people, the ſanction of which was no other than temporal pains and penalties. Let it not be objected further, that the penalties, which make the ſanction of natural law, affect nations collectively, and not men individually; for which reaſon, they are leſs proper to enforce the obſervation of the law. The penalties annexed to the breach of the law of Moses were of the ſame kind, in general, oppreſſion, famine, peſtilence, wars and captivities: and when particular puniſhments were inflicted by virtue of this law, it did no more, than what is done every day and in all countries, with leſs tumult and with better order, in conſequence of the law of nature, and

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for the preſervation of ſociety. Once more, let it not be objected, as it has been, that this law is not univerſally known. It is univerſally given, and if it is not known and practiſed alike by all mankind, many of the firſt great principles of it are ſo in every human ſociety, even in thoſe of the leaſt civiliſed people; whilſt the far greateſt part of the world are invincibly ignorant of the firſt principles of chriſtianity, without the knowledge of which, and without faith in which, they are all condemned to eternal puniſhment.

INSTEAD of making objections ſo inſufficient as theſe, and ſo liable to be retorted, let the ſame men confeſs that the divine inſtitution of the law of nature reſts on fuller and more convincing proofs, both external and internal, than any that have been found, or could be given, of the divine inſtitution of chriſtianity. The latter has all thoſe which the manner in which it was revealed, and the nature of it, allowed it to have. But the manner in which the former has been revealed to mankind, as well as the matter of it, admitted of proofs of both kinds, much more evident, and much more proportioned to the human underſtanding. The good news of chriſtianity was publiſhed by CHRIST and his Apoſtles; it was confirmed by miracles, and the proof was no doubt ſufficient for the converſion of all thoſe who heard the publication of this doctrine, and ſaw the confirmation of it. One can only wonder, that any ſuch remained unconvinced. But this proof became, in a very little time, traditional and hiſtorical: and one might be allowed to wonder, how the effect of it continued, and increaſed too, as the force of it diminiſhed, if the reaſons of this phænomenon were not obvious in hiſtory. Nay, tho' they are ſo, one may ſtill wonder why they, who propagate chriſtianity, have not met oftener with the anſwer which ETHELRED, the Saxon king,

made to AUGUSTINE, "I cannot abandon the religion of my "fathers, for one that you would perſuade me to receive on the "authority of perſons quite unknown to me." He came however afterwards to a better ſenſe, either by the ſupernatural effects of grace, or by the natural effects of the cajolement or importunity, perhaps, of BERTHE. The revelation of the law of nature is of another kind. Whether the word of GOD is his word may be, and we ſee has been, diſputed by theiſts. But whether his works are his works, neither has been, nor can be, diſputed by any ſuch. Natural religion therefore being founded on human nature, the work of GOD, and on the neceſſary conditions of human happineſs which are impoſed by the whole ſyſtem of it, every man who receives the law of nature receives it on his own authority, and not on the authority of other men known or unknown, and in their natural ſtate as fallible as himſelf. The revelation is not communicated to him only by tradition and hiſtory: it is a perpetual, a ſtanding revelation, always made, always making, and as preſent in theſe days, as in the days of ADAM, to all his offspring. The external proofs then, for theſe are properly ſuch, of the divine inſtitution of the law of nature, are concluſive to every theiſt. Let us examine the internal, and compare them with the proofs that are contained in, or deduced from, the ſcriptures, to ſhew their divine original.

VIII.

NOW the unwritten law of GOD, unwritten even in the hearts of men, how early ſoever inſtinct diſpoſes them to receive it, is an object of knowledge, not of belief. We know that GOD exiſts, with a certainty little inferior to that which we have of our own exiſtence. We know that he

has given us a law of our nature, with as great a certainty as inward conſciouſneſs and outward obſervation can give us: and by theſe means, by which we acquire all other ſcience, it is in the power of every rational creature to acquire as much of this ſcience as the ends of his being make it neceſſary that he ſhould. Natural law is founded in reaſon, which every creature, that has it, may exerciſe, and the creature, that has it not, is not ſubject to the law. Chriſtianity is founded in faith; and faith proceeds from grace. He, who has not faith, cannot fulfil a law that conſiſts, at leaſt, as much in believing as in practiſing: and whether he ſhall have grace, or no, does not depend on him. Thus the difference between the internal proofs of the two laws ſtands in one reſpect. The contents of the law of nature are objects of ſuch a certainty as the author of nature alone can communicate. The contents of the whole chriſtian ſyſtem, laid down in our ſcriptures, are objects of ſuch a probability as may force aſſent very reaſonably, in this caſe, without doubt; altho' a concurrence of various circumſtances, improved by the credulity of ſome men and the artifice of others, has forced this aſſent in caſes not very diſſimilar, and wherein it would have been more reaſonably withheld. The difference here ſtated, between the manifeſtations of the will of GOD to man in the law of nature and in every other law, is ſo true, that every other law is controuled by it, and could not paſs for the law of GOD if it was ſeen to be repugnant to the former. To ſay nothing of the law given to ADAM, nor of that given to NOAH, according to the Jews, all orthodox writers think themſelves obliged to hold, for the honor of the moſaical law, not only that there is nothing contrary to the natural law enjoined by it, "id quod eâ lege præcipitur non eſſe contra jus naturæ," as GROTIUS ſays*, but alſo that all the obligations of the

* Lib. 1. c. 1. De Jure Bel. & Pac.

natural

natural law are contained in it, " contineri quidem in " ſacro illo corpore ſeu pentateucho," as Mr. SELDEN ſays; tho' he owns at the ſame time that much chemical ſkill is neceſſary to extract them from it. That the chriſtian law is nothing elſe than the law of nature, enforced by a new revelation, every friend to chriſtianity admits, and the worſt of its enemies dare not deny, tho' he denies the reality of the revelation.

ANOTHER internal proof of the divine original of the law of nature is the plainneſs and ſimplicity, which renders it intelligible in all times and all places alike, and proportions it to the meaneſt underſtanding. It has been made intricate by caſuiſtry, that of lawyers and that of divines, as chriſtian religion has been by theology. But there is a conſiderable difference between the two caſes. The firſt principles of natural religion are ſo ſimple and plain, that caſuiſtry has no apparent pretence to meddle with them, no more than it would have if it pretended to teach us to ſee things that lie obvious before us, at a juſt diſtance, and exactly proportioned to our ſight. Theſe principles want neither paraphraſe nor commentary, to be ſufficiently underſtood; whereas the very firſt principles of chriſtian religion, concerning the fall and redemption of man, are ſo veiled in myſtery of language, that without a comment, or with one, and even with that of St. PAUL, they give us no clear and diſtinct ideas, nor any thing more than forms of ſpeech and words to pronounce. They who under this pretence, ſuch as it is, introduce reaſon where reaſon has nothing to do, explain what revelation has left unexplained, and define articles of faith which are either defined in the word of GOD, or which no mortal has any right to define, introduce afterwards their theology, under the name of moral theology, where that has nothing to

do, and corrupt the unwritten law of GOD even with leſs pretence than they corrupted the written. I charge this double corruption upon them the more boldly, becauſe every one, who is in the leaſt converſant in their writings, is able to bring numerous inſtances of both, and to ſhew, that I may keep to my preſent ſubject, how they have eſtabliſhed doctrines and decided caſes of conſcience, in direct oppoſition to the moſt known and the moſt ſacred duties of natural religion, till they have rendered men infinitely worſe than they would have been in HOBBES's ſtate of nature, without any religion or law whatever. Two things alone have checked this torrent of iniquity, to ſome degree. The firſt has been the interpoſition of the civil power. The ſecond has been the inſuperable difficulty of determining men, generally and conſtantly, and out of ſome peculiar circumſtances, to violate the laws of their nature, as individuals, or as members of ſociety, by precept, by example, or by any authority whatever. The light of nature, like that of the ſun, may be eclipſed: it cannot be extinguiſhed.

NOTWITHSTANDING all the abuſes of private and public morality, therefore, that the paſſions of ſome men may commit occaſionally, and that the particular intereſt of others may invite them to propagate, even under the maſk of religion, theſe two internal proofs of the divine inſtitution of the law of nature, the conſcious certainty that we have, and the plainneſs and ſimplicity of it, are in their full force, and ſuperior to thoſe of the ſame kind which any other revelation contains. It may ſeem ſtrange to many that the plainneſs and ſimplicity of the law of nature ſhould be brought as a proof of it's divinity. They have been accuſtomed to think that types, ſymbols, figures, dark enigmatical expreſſions, and every thing that has the appearance of myſtery, are eſſential

tial marks of a divine revelation. Such might a revelation made to ſuperior Beings appear to us; and ſuch would a revelation made to us concerning the divine nature, and the ſecret œconomy of the divine providence, not only appear to be, but really be, myſterious and unintelligible, and therefore no revelation at all. For this very reaſon, it is agreeable to all our ideas of wiſdom to believe, that no ſuch revelation was intended to be made to us. Such means could not be proportionable to any end. The all-wiſe Creator could not mean to inform his creatures unintelligibly, nor to leave an explanation of his nature, and of the whole œconomy of his providence, to be made by men who undertake both preſumptuouſly, and who diſhonor both, as far as man may be ſaid to honor or diſhonor God, by all the ſilly paradoxes they advance dogmatically, and without having, for the moſt part, any juſt notions even of the wiſdom and dignity of human conduct in ſuperior forms of life. Such myſterious means then could not have been effectual, unleſs our improvement in metaphyſical knowledge had been the end of divine wiſdom, which it would be impertinent to ſuppoſe: and if the end of this wiſdom was to inform us of the divine will, to ſhew us the perfection of our nature, and to teach us to tend towards it in the purſuit of happineſs, ſuch means are quite unneceſſary. They are, therefore, proportioned to no end. They are, therefore, unworthy of God.

Clearness, preciſion, and a true conformity to the nature of things are the perfections of human, and much more of divine laws. Tho' the nature of the univerſe, and the rules by which God proceeds in the government of every ſyſtem contained in it, of ours among the reſt, are unknown to us, yet is the nature of our own ſyſtem, as far as the morality of actions is concerned, ſufficiently known to us, and the laws of

of our nature conſequently, ſince they reſult from it. Here then is all the clearneſs, all the preciſion, and all the conformity to the nature of things that GOD can give, or man deſire. From hence we may, and we ought, to form our judgment of all laws that are aſſumed to be divine. They muſt not be incomprehenſible; becauſe, tho' they proceed from the divine intelligence, they are adapted to the human. GOD does not ſhew his own nature in them. He ſhews us our nature, and our duty; by the firſt of which we ſtand in the loweſt relation of intellectual creatures to their Creator, and by the laſt in that of ſubjects and ſervants to a gracious and beneficent lord and maſter, who gives us laws neither ambiguous nor captious, and who commands us nothing which it is not our intereſt to perform.

ANOTHER internal proof of the divinity of natural law muſt not be paſſed over without mention. As all is ſimple and plain, nothing is mean nor trifling in it. This religion ſhews us a Supreme Being, veiled in the majeſty of his nature, but manifeſted in all his works, to be the true and only true object of our adoration. In the exiſtence he has given us, and in the benefits that attach us ſo ſtrongly to it, this religion ſhews him to be the firſt and greateſt object of our gratitude; in the eſtabliſhed order of things, ſubject to ſo many viciſſitudes and yet ſo conſtant, to be the reaſonable, as well as neceſſary object of our reſignation; and finally in the wants, diſtreſſes, and dangers, which theſe viciſſitudes bring frequently upon us, to be the comfortable object of our hope: in which hope, the religion of nature will teach us, no doubt, to addreſs ourſelves to the Almighty, in a manner conſiſtent with an entire reſignation to his will, as ſome of the heathen did. But this religion will not teach us to pray, as if we informed omniſcience, or expoſtulated with omnipotence, as thoſe who pre-

tend to be the moſt reformed among chriſtians are accuſtomed to do; nor to make religion a ſervice of ſhew and outward geſture, as your pretended catholic church has done. The religion of nature teaches to worſhip GOD in ſpirit and in truth, that is, inwardly and ſincerely. It neither confounds ſpiritual pride and enthuſiaſm, nor theatrical pomp and ſuperſtitious rites, with devotion. Fraud, envy, malice, ſilent and ſecret vices, more dangerous often to ſociety than thoſe of greater eclat, have lurked behind the former. The latter, tho' they affect the ſenſes without touching the heart, have paſſed in general, and ſtill paſs, for divine worſhip. GOD has been ſerved, in a manner which the moſt ſanguinary tyrant would abhor, by ſome people. By others, with all the circumſtances of that low adulation which earthly monarchs require, and whereof the prieſts themſelves have claimed a ſhare. That there is a middle proceeding fit to be obſerved, between a theatrical worſhip and a worſhip ſtripped of all outward ſolemnity and pomp, I am ready to admit. In this, and in a multitude of caſes, the law of nature or right reaſon may approve ſuch laws and inſtitutions as nature or reaſon has not preſcribed; becauſe they may be proper, and even neceſſary means to promote the obſervation of this law. But then they ought to paſs for forms directed to this purpoſe, for human not for divine ordinances. Let the prieſt wear a ridiculous cap and breaſt-plate, or fringes and bells on his robe, but let it not be ſaid that the Supreme Being took care of his attire, or that ſuch trifles as theſe were the inſtitutions of divine wiſdom.

THERE is nothing in the law of nature unworthy the author of it; and much leſs can it, or does it, contain any thing inconſiſtent with itſelf. The rules by which GOD governs even the ſyſtem to which we belong are unknown to us; but this we

we know moſt certainly, that he cannot command in particular, what he forbids in general. He who has made benevolence to all rational beings the fundamental law of our nature, can never command ſome to rob, or to murder others; to uſurp on the rights of their fellow-creatures, and to exterminate whole nations. In ſhort, the internal proofs of the divinity of the law of nature, both poſitive and negative, are ſuch as render this law the true criterion of every law and religion that pretend to the ſame original. It may be diſputed, perhaps, whether our abſtract notions of the moral fitneſs and unfitneſs of things afford a ſufficient rule, whereby to judge of the truth of any religion that is ſaid to come from God. But there is no room to diſpute, whether the conformity or nonconformity of ſuch a religion to that law which God has given to all his human creatures, enacted in the conſtitution of their nature, and diſcernible by the uſe of thoſe faculties he has given them likewiſe, is a rule ſufficient for this purpoſe. Was it otherwiſe, we ſhould have no ſufficient rule at all. Men might diſpute eternally about the dictates of right reaſon, and the will of God would be entirely out of the queſtion; or it would be made determinable by an indeterminable queſtion, what thoſe eternal fitneſſes and unfitneſſes of things are, according to which, and in a dependency on which, the will of God muſt proceed, and be ſignified to his creatures. That this would be ſo, is evident in the different opinions that have been entertained, ever ſince theology was made a ſcience, concerning the exiſtence of evil as well as good, and concerning the diſtribution of them. But if we confine ourſelves to the revelation God has made of his will in his works, and to the knowledge we have that his will is neceſſarily determined by his wiſdom, we ſhall have a certain and ſufficient rule by which to judge of his laws. What is the will of God, is a

queſtion eaſily anſwered. What ought this will to be, is a queſtion we cannot preſume to anſwer without abſurdity and impiety both. To anſwer the firſt, we need to go no higher than the moral obligations that ariſe in our own ſyſtem, and of which we have very adequate ideas. To anſwer the laſt, we muſt go up to the nature of the author of nature, and to a multitude of other natures, the aſſuming of which puts the Supreme Being juſt in the caſe of his creature man. The nature of the human ſyſtem is independent on man; and yet he is obliged to derive the rules of his conduct from it. Juſt ſo, upon this aſſumption, the abſtract natures and eternal eſſences of things are independent on GOD; and yet GOD was obliged to make, and is obliged to govern his ſyſtem according to them.

BY employing our reaſon to collect the will of GOD from the fund of our nature, phyſical and moral, and by contemplating ſeriouſly and frequently the laws that are plainly, and even neceſſarily, deducible from thence, we may acquire not only a particular knowledge of theſe laws, but a general, and in ſome ſort an habitual, knowledge of the manner in which GOD is pleaſed to exerciſe his ſupreme power in this ſyſtem, beyond which we have no concern. We do not ſee the divine painter, if I may employ ſo low a compariſon on ſo high a ſubject; but we grow accuſtomed to his manner, and we learn to deſpiſe thoſe who preſent us a ſign-poſt dawbing, and call it impudently the work of RAPHAEL.

IX.

AS certain, as plain, as important and as conſiſtent as the law of nature is, it has been blended with many abſurd and contradictory laws, in all ages and countries, by legiſlators who publiſhed them, ſometimes in their own name,

and ſometimes in the name of GOD, as well as with cuſtoms of the ſame kinds; which, if they aroſe independent on laws, obtained the force of laws. EUSEBIUS, in the firſt book of his evangelical preparation, gives a long catalogue of them; and he gives it for a very good purpoſe, to ſhew in ſeveral inſtances how ſuch laws and cuſtoms as theſe had been reformed by the goſpel, that is, by a law which renewed and confirmed and enforced the original law of nature. SEXTUS EMPIRICUS, an antient, and MONTAGNE, a modern ſceptic, collected numerous examples of the ſame ſort, but to a very bad purpoſe; to ſhew, if they had been able, that there is no ſuch thing as a fixed immutable law of nature, which obliges all men at all times alike. They ſought it where it is not to be found, and, not finding it there, concluded it was to be found no where. This doctrine has been promoted by pyrrhonians, ſceptics, and academicians, between whom it is neither obvious nor worth our while to diſtinguiſh, as well as by dogmatical atheiſts; for they who doubted of GOD's exiſtence, or who denied it, could not fail to doubt of, or to deny, the exiſtence of his law. Of all theſe, it will be ſufficient to mention the admired CARNEADES, the ſum of whoſe diſputation upon this ſubject LACTANTIUS has preſerved; and altho' it be one of thoſe trite common-place citations which abound in learned writings, yet it deſerves a particular mention; becauſe it expreſſes, in very few words, the full abſurdity of thoſe who deny a natural law, and points out the two principal blunders on which their whole reaſoning proceeds.

CARNEADES then affirmed, * "that laws were made by

* Jura ſibi homines pro utilitate ſanxiſſe, ſcilicet varia pro moribus, et apud eoſdem pro temporibus ſæpe mutata; jus autem naturale nullum eſſe. Omnes et homines, et alias animantes, ad utilitates ſuas, natura ducente, ferri: proinde, aut nullam eſſe juſtitiam, aut ſi ſit aliqua, ſummam eſſe ſtultitiam; quoniam ſibi noceret alienis commodis conſulens.

"men,

" men, for their utility; that they were therefore various, as " the characters of thoſe who made them; and, changeable " among the ſame men, according to the various circum- " ſtances of time: but that there was no law of nature. " That all men, and all animals, were carried to their ſeveral " kinds of utility by nature, ſo that there could be no juſtice, " or if there was any ſuch thing, it muſt be extremely fooliſh; " becauſe, in providing for the good of others, the juſt " would hurt themſelves." That laws were made for utility, both thoſe which we call civil and thoſe which we call the laws of nations, that they are various as the characters of men, and changeable as the circumſtances of time, no one will deny. But will it follow, that there is no ſuch thing as a natural law, ſuch as the wiſeſt philoſophers, and even the antient poets have acknowledged, altho' a little confuſedly according to their cuſtom, yet in plain and direct oppoſition to this doctrine? a law, neither invented by men, nor enacted by human authority, " neque hominum ingeniis excogita- " tam, neque ſcitum aliquod populorum? a law not coæval with the divine mind, as TULLY* would have it, when he ſays, " orta autem eſt ſimul cum mente divinâ;" but ſuch a law, as he deſcribes in the words that ſtand immediately before theſe, a law proceeding from the nature of things, " ratio pro- " fecta à rerum natura;" a law which did not begin when it was firſt reduced into writing, " quæ non tum denique inci- " pit lex eſſe cum ſcripta eſt," but when it firſt exiſted " ſed " tum cum orta eſt:" and it exiſted firſt, when that ſyſtem of nature, from which it reſults, " unde profecta eſt," began to exiſt? The firſt part therefore of this academical declamation proved nothing againſt natural law; and CARNEADES might as well have affirmed, that the Athenians had no laws before SOLON, becauſe SOLON gave them ſome; or that rapes were

* TULLY de leg. l. 1.

lawful

lawful at Rome before SEXTUS TARQUINIUS raviſhed LUCRETIA, becauſe there was no written law before that time which forbid them. The ſecond part contains two blunders, that run into one another. It is a blunder ſurely to aſſume, that men, and all other animals, are carried indiſcriminately by nature to their end, utility; without diſtinguiſhing between natural inſtinct common to both, and ſuperior reaſon peculiar to man. It is a blunder ſurely to aſſume, in conſequence, that ſince utility is their object, juſtice is a folly. Men may have pleaſure, to which inſtinct hurries them, but they cannot have happineſs, to which reaſon leads them, without juſtice, according to what has been already laid down: and it is wiſdom therefore, not folly, to forego the firſt in ſome inſtances, in every inſtance where the leaſt incompatibility is found between them, that we may ſecure the laſt. The good of individuals is ſo cloſely connected with the good of ſociety, that the means of promoting one cannot be ſeparated from thoſe of promoting the other: and SOCRATES was in the right to curſe the men, who firſt divided, in opinion, things that cohered, in nature, morality and utility: "qui "primum hæc naturâ cohærentia opinione diſtraxiſſent." * I might have quoted the latter part of what LACTANTIUS makes CARNEADES ſay, and which is ſaid to ſhew the great hurt that juſtice would do, in order to ſhew more truly the great hurt that injuſtice does. If the Romans, and all thoſe who were poſſeſſed of empire, had been obliged to reſtore to every people the unjuſt uſurpations they had made upon them, theſe conquerors would have been obliged to return to their huts and to their antient penury, "ad caſas eſſe redeundum, et "in egeſtate et miſeriis jacendum." But it is almoſt too trifling to deſerve mention; ſince, transferred from the law of nations to the laws of particular ſocieties, it objects to juſtice the great miſchief of obliging a robber to reſtore to the

* TULLY de Off. l. 3.

owner

owner what he has ſtolen from him, and denies that reſtitution is juſt, altho' reparation of injuries is plainly eſſential to juſtice.

If we had all the volumes that have been written concerning the laws, inſtitutions, cuſtoms, and manners of the different ſocieties of men, we ſhould be rather perplexed than informed concerning the true ſyſtem of natural law: and Montagne might challenge his readers, pretty ſafely, to ſhew him any one of theſe which had the ſeal of univerſal approbation. But even this would not ſerve his purpoſe, nor afford any proof againſt the exiſtence of a law which human reaſon collects from the human ſyſtem, as he vainly imagined in his zeal for pyrrhoniſm. The laws of nature are truly what my lord Bacon ſtyles his aphoriſms, the laws of laws. Civil laws are always imperfect, and often falſe deductions from them, or applications of them; nay, they ſtand, in many inſtances, in direct oppoſition to them. It follows from hence, not that there is no natural law, but that civil laws have been made without a ſufficient and conſtant regard to it. Erroneous opinions of philoſophers, unreaſonable inſtitutions of legiſlators, are often derived from the principles of nature, and may be traced up to them. The fountain from which they flowed was pure. They grew foul in their courſe; and no wonder they ſhould, ſince the channels through which they paſſed were infected with human paſſions, human prejudices, and human ignorance. Such laws, as cannot be traced up even under theſe conditions, to the original of all law, are the arbitrary dictates of mere will, impoſed on ſome men by the force or fraud of others, and confirmed by education and cuſtom.

Thus is the law of nature hid from our ſight by all theſe variegated clouds of civil laws and cuſtoms, as the divine author

their of it is by thoſe of ſuperſtition and artificial theology. Some gleams of true light may be ſeen thro' them. But they render it a dubious light, and it can be no better to thoſe who have the keeneſt ſight, till theſe interpoſitions are removed. Then, indeed, the objects appear in their full and genuine luſtre to every ſight; for that which hid them both could affect neither.

X.

MANY hypotheſes have been made to account for the beginning of civil ſociety, for the nature of it, and for the motives to it. All of them have ſome degree of probability, and might have ſome ſhare in framing thoſe political congregations and unions, by which mankind has been divided into diſtinct nations, and the great commonwealth, as the ſtoicians called it not improperly, into diſtinct ſtates. But no one of theſe muſt paſs for univerſal, nor be ſuppoſed to have done the work alone. In general we may ſay, that the foundations of civil or political ſocieties were laid by nature, tho' they are the creatures of art. Societies were begun by inſtinct, and improved by experience. They were diſturbed early, perhaps as ſoon as they were formed, both from within and from without, by the paſſions of men: and they have been maintained ever ſince, in oppoſition to them, very imperfectly, and under great viciſſitudes, by human reaſon, which is exerciſed in particular ſyſtems of law for particular ſtates, in leagues and covenants between ſtate and ſtate, and in tacit agreements that conſtitute what is commonly called the law of nations.

The firſt principles of every thing, that requires human underſtanding and human induſtry to be employed about it, are rightly laid in nature; they are obvious to our ſearch, and we are able to diſcover and purſue the conſequences of them in ſpeculation and in practice. But in doing this, we are left, as I may ſay, to ourſelves. We owe the firſt diſcoveries to our own obſervation, and the progreſs we make afterwards to the ſtrength of our own underſtandings, to our application and induſtry. We may do this well or ill; we may do too little or attempt too much, according to the uſe, and the right or wrong judgment, we make of our faculties; for the "bona and mala ratio," that Cotta inſiſts upon ſo much*, is nothing elſe.

It is in great meaſure otherwiſe in the caſe of civil polity. In this we are not left to ourſelves. We are not left to make the diſcovery, nor to proceed, in conſequence of it, by the ſtrength of our own underſtandings. We are led to it by the hand of God, as it were, and even before we have the full uſe of our underſtandings. When God made man, he made a creature, the happineſs of whoſe being depended on his ſociability with animals of his own ſpecies. He made him therefore a ſociable animal, an animal capable of feeling the immediate pleaſure and advantage of ſociety. The neceſſity of natural precedes that of artificial ſociety; and the former, which is connected by inſtinct, prepares us for the latter, to which we are determined by reaſon. We are made capable of both in their turns. The infant cannot conceive the nature of thoſe covenants, that conſtitute civil ſociety, any more than he can propagate his ſpecies. Neither his mental, nor

* CIC. de Nat. Deor.

his corporeal powers are arrived at their maturity. The ignorant man does not know them, becauſe he has not informed himſelf, nor been informed by others, about them: and he who is born ſtupid is out of the caſe. I ſay this the rather, to expoſe once more the futility of that argument which has been mentioned already. To prove that the child, whilſt he is a child, and the ignorant man, whilſt he is ignorant, can neither inſtitute civil ſociety, nor comprehend the nature of it, ſerves to no other purpoſe, than to compoſe to ſlumber a reader of common ſagacity, who perceives at one glance the different ſenſes, tho' equally true, in which men are reckoned qualified for civil ſociety, and fiſhes to ſwim, or birds to fly, or oaks to bear acorns*.

You poets have given beautiful deſcriptions of a golden age, with which you ſuppoſe that the world began. Some venerable fathers of the church have given much the ſame deſcriptions of another golden age, with which they ſuppoſe that it is to end, and which will make ſome amends for the ſhort duration of the paradiſaical ſtate, ſince the latter is to continue a thouſand years. Now, tho' I do not believe that men were as good, any more than I believe that other animals were as tame, by nature, as you repreſent them to have been in the primæval world; yet I do not believe neither, that ſuch a ſtate, as HOBBES aſſumed, ever did, or could exiſt, nor that men ever were in a ſtate of abſolute individuality at any time before the inſtitution of civil ſociety. How they came into the world, reaſon will tell us no better than hiſtory or tradition does. To ſuppoſe that the firſt of human kind were quickened into life by the ſun, and were animated ſyſtems of mud, as the Egyptians did, I think, according to DIODORUS SICULUS, would be too abſurd; neither could we conceive, if the hypotheſis was admitted, how theſe human inſects were

* Vid. PUFFEN. Lib. vii. c. 1.

able to provide for their wants, and to rear themſelves up to manhood, whatever we aſſumed the phyſical conſtitution of the world to have been at that time. If we are perſuaded then, that this world, and the inhabitants of it had a beginning in time, we muſt of neceſſity aſſume that the firſt men and the firſt women, or that one man and one woman at leaſt, were produced in full ſtrength and vigor of body and mind, prompted by inſtinct to an act of which they might not foreſee the conſequence, and prompted by ſelf-love, when they ſaw it, to love themſelves in their children, and to nurſe and educate their offspring.

THUS natural ſocieties and paternal governments began. I ſhall not inquire how far the latter is founded in that blind act of generation, whoſe motive and end is the mutual pleaſure of man and woman alone. Much leſs ſhall I miſpend any time in comparing the opinion of GROTIUS[a], which is favorable to paternal, with that of HOBBES, which is ſo to maternal authority[b]. This only I will obſerve, by the way, that if HOBBES advanced a paradox, it was ſuch an one as he might have maintained with advantage againſt GROTIUS, and even with more againſt FILMER, who left the word "mother" out of his quotation of the fifth commandment. GROTIUS did not preſume thus far, but he gives the preference to paternal authority, in the caſe of any diſpute between the two, on account of the pre-eminence of the ſex, "ob ſexus præſtantium." Another writer would have urged, that if the right of parents over children was acquired by generation, as GROTIUS[c] affirmed, the right of the mother ought to be preferred, in caſe of any diſpute, ſince her right by generation can never

a) Lib. ii. c. 5. b) De Cive, c. 9.
c) Generatione jus acquiritur parentibus in liberos.

be doubtful; the father's may. She is always a real mother: he may be often a reputed father, and the argument "ob "sexus præstantium" is, in this particular instance, more applicable to the woman. But however this may be, the paternal authority, arising from education, is clear: and that instinct, which determines parents to take care of their children, gives them, by the law of nature, all that authority over them *, without which they could not take this care. This authority is and must be absolute, whilst their children are unable to judge for, and to direct themselves. It becomes limited, when their children are able to do this without their help, and yet continue to live in the same family. It ceases, when their children go out of their family, and acquire independency, or even paternal dominion of their own.

THUS far the law of nature is plain: and this is sufficient to shew, how we are led by the hand of GOD, that is, by the circumstances in which he has ordained that we should be born; by the necessary dependance of children, by the instinct of parents, by information, by habit, and finally by reason; how we are led, I say, to civil thro' natural society, and are fitted to be members of one, by having been members of the other. This is the case of every one in particular, and has been that of mankind collectively considered.

ALL the inhabitants of some other planet may have been, perhaps, from their creation united in one great society, speaking the same language, and living under the same government; or too perfect by their nature to need the restraint of any. But mankind is constituted very differently: and altho' the natural law of our whole species be the same, yet we are by nature incapable, on many accounts, of uniting under one

* GROTIUS, ib.

form

form of government, or of ſubmitting to one rule of life. Our neareſt approaches to this ſtate are vaſtly diſtant from it; and even theſe were made by ſlow degrees, and with great variety of imperfection; altho' nature herſelf, by directing the firſt, made all the reſt the more eaſy, as ſhe made them the more neceſſary. Men were never out of ſociety; for if they were divided into families before they were aſſembled into nations, they were in ſociety ſtill from their original: and the want of comprehending that which is natural, and that which is artificial, properly diſtinguiſhed, under the ſame general term, has produced much confuſion in reaſoning on this ſubject, and has ſerved to maintain many a falſe argument. BAYLE*, for inſtance, denies that the peace, the happineſs, and even the preſervation of mankind, depend on ſociety. How does he ſupport his paradox? As ill at leaſt, as he ſupports the inutility of religion to government. He cites SALLUST to prove that the Aborigines in Italy, and the Getulians and the Lybians in Africa, had neither laws, nor magiſtrates, nor forms of government. He cites POMPONIUS MELA, and he might have cited many other authorities antient and modern, to much the ſame purpoſe; for authors, by repeating one another, propagate the ſame miſtakes very often, and increaſe the number of witneſſes, without ſtrengthening the teſtimony; which may have happened on theſe occaſions for aught he knew. But this he knew, this he ſhould have obſerved, and this he would have obſerved, if the obſervation had made for him in this place, for he makes it in all thoſe where it does make for him, how much authors are apt to exaggerate in their deſcriptions, and the characters they draw. How barbarous were thoſe nations, who broke the Roman empire, repreſented to be, the Goths for example, or the Lombards? and yet when they came to ſettle in Italy, and to be better known,

* Penſ. diver. 118.

how

how much leſs barbarous did they appear, even than the Greeks and the Romans? what prudence in their government? what wiſdom in their laws? But I touch this without inſiſting on it. Let it be, that the Aborigines, the Getulians, the Lybians, and the inhabitants of the inward parts of Africa, had neither written laws, nor civil magiſtrates, will it follow that they had no cuſtoms which were among them equivalent to laws, no fathers nor elders that ſupplied the place of civil magiſtrates, no forms of government becauſe they had not thoſe of civil government? Will it follow, in ſhort, that they lived without ſociety, becauſe they lived without political ſociety? The very paſſage cited from POMPONIUS MELA ſhews the contrary. They were diſperſed in families indeed, and theſe families were governed by no law common to them all, nor by any joint conſultations. "In familias paſſim et ſine lege "diſperſi, nihil in commune conſultant." Juſt ſo are the Arabs of the deſart, many of the Tartars, and other vagabond people at this day, not united by any national conſtitution: but ſo far from being without ſociety or government, that their ſeveral families, or tribes, or hordes, are ſo many ſocieties, and often better regulated than thoſe that appear to be more civiliſed. BAYLE, and the authors he cites, had nothing in their minds but political ſocieties of human inſtitution, and did not advert to thoſe that are natural. When he affirmed, "that theſe people multi-"plied, and preſerved themſelves without living in ſociety," and denied, on the authority of theſe examples, "that ſocial "life is abſolutely neceſſary to the preſervation of the human "race", he did not enough conſider, that it was impoſſible they ſhould multiply without forming ſocieties, and that he might have ſaid juſt as well, that a country, over-run with independent companies of ſoldiers, had none in it, becauſe theſe companies were not yet formed into legions or regiments.

ANTIENT

ANTIENT traditions, ſacred and prophane, how imperfect and uncertain ſoever they are, give us ſufficient reaſon, by their concurrence in this general account, to believe that mankind was at firſt diſperſed in families, which formed ſo many diſtinct ſocieties under paternal government. The moſaical hiſtory contains the deſcent of one, that of SETH, down to the flood. There was no need of mentioning that of CAIN, which was to be wholly deſtroyed in this terrible cataſtrophe. The deſcent of the family of SEM, after the flood, is moſt carefully recorded, and thoſe of HAM and of JAPHET are occaſionally mentioned: for which difference a very good reaſon may be found, ſince the genealogy of the patriarchs, and of the people of GOD, was to be deduced from SEM. Our divines find a further reaſon. The Meſſiah was to proceed, above two thouſand years afterwards, from a branch of the ſame family: and therefore the greateſt care poſſible was taken to preſerve the genealogy, as well as to perpetuate the race; of the latter of which PATRICK gives a moſt remarkable inſtance in his commentary on Geneſis. If the daughters of LOT committed inceſt with their father, we are not to aſcribe it to unnatural luſt, but to their innocence, their ſimplicity, and a laudable concern for the preſervation of their father's family; for they believed all mankind deſtroyed, according to IRENÆUS; or, at leaſt, they might believe that none were left who might go in unto them, "juxta morem "univerſæ terræ *. Our learned biſhop aſſumes, much more ingeniouſly and with greater regard to virgin modeſty, that theſe young women had the ſame eager deſire, which then poſſeſſed the hearts of good people, to fulfil the promiſe of the Meſſiah. It was that which put them on this otherwiſe

* Vid. lib. Gen. c. xix.

monſtrous

monſtrous crime. It was that which ſanctified it, in the intention, tho' not in the event; for the two accurſed races of Moabites and Ammonites were the fruits of this inceſt.

XI.

I HAVE not ſpoken of this family to introduce the anecdote juſt mentioned, inſtructive and edifying as it is, but to ſhew, by an illuſtrious example, what the firſt ſocieties of men were, and how civil ſocieties aroſe out of natural, as natural ſocieties aroſe out of one another. When any of theſe grew too numerous to inhabit the ſame country, or diſſentions aroſe among them, as it happened in the caſe of ABRAHAM and LOT, and of ESAU and JACOB afterwards, they ſeparated. When the father of the family preferred one of his ſons to all the reſt, as ABRAHAM had done, and as it was neceſſary that ISAAC ſhould do in order to give JACOB the preeminence over ESAU, and the Iſraelites over the Idumeans, the families ſeparated likewiſe, and new families were formed by the ſwarms that iſſued from antient hives. The increaſe of families was not only great in thoſe prolific ages, as we may obſerve by the numerous poſterity of the two brothers ESAU and JACOB; but we may conclude, from reaſon and analogy both, that if families ſometimes ſeparated, they ſometimes united too, for mutual conveniency; and that in this manner ſeveral little dynaſties were formed, which had more ſettled eſtabliſhments than the vagabond families. How little theſe dynaſties were, we may judge by the defeat which ABRAHAM gave, with an army of three hundred and eighteen of his ſervants, to the four kings who had beat the five, and pillaged SODOM and GOMORRAH. There has been much learned diſpute about the Egyptian dynaſties: and they, who have corrupted

MANETHO more, very probably, than he did the truth, have delivered them down to us in ſuch a broken, tranſpoſed, interpolated condition, that nothing almoſt which is probable can be collected from them. Why ſhould we not believe, that his thirty dynaſties were cotemporary, not ſucceſſive? Why ſhould the Egyptians not have been under the dominion of ſeveral petty kings, as well as their neighbours, when the title of king was beſtowed ſo very liberally? On the whole, it cannot be doubted, I think, that the firſt ſocieties of men were thoſe of families formed by nature and governed by natural law, nor that kingdoms and ſtates were the ſecond.

NEIGHBOURHOOD, an intercourſe of good offices, and, in a word, mutual conveniency, might give a beginning, by the union of independent families under compacts and covenants, to civil ſocieties. But the principal cauſe of ſuch artificial or political unions was of a very different kind. We cannot ſuppoſe, that all the members of every family lived in a ſtate of uninterrupted concord. There was a quarrel, and one brother aſſaſſinated another, even in the family of the firſt man. But ſtill in ſocieties, as confined as theſe, the father's eye was over the whole community; paternal authority, not the royal fatherhood of that ridiculous writer FILMER, was always ready to interpoſe, and the remedy of ſeparation was always at hand when every other failed. The ſtate of mankind altered extremely when families had been long ſeparated, whatever the cauſe of ſeparation was; and when the natural bands were not only looſened, but loſt and forgot in the courſe of generations; when there was no longer any regard to one common anceſtor; when there was no authority to interpoſe between different people, and to influence and direct their conduct, as paternal authority had done, where different members of the ſame family were alone concerned; then mutual injuries became more frequent, and their conſequences more fatal.

As faſt as the diſtribution of mankind into families, and as paternal government ceaſed, men went out of a natural into a political ſtate. The former was ſo little what it has been repreſented, a ſtate of individuality, that individuality could never be properly aſcribed to creatures born in ſociety, and members of it as ſoon as born. Individuality belongs to communities, not to perſons. Families might be conceived as individuals, tho' not men, in the ſtate of nature; and civil ſocieties much more ſo in the political ſtate. The reaſon is plain. We have a natural ſociability, that is, we are determined by ſelf-love to ſeek our pleaſure and our utility in ſociety, as it has been ſaid; but when theſe ends are once ſufficiently anſwered, natural ſociability declines, and natural inſociability commences. The influence of ſelf-love reaches no further. Societies become in all reſpects individuals, that is, they have no regard to others except relatively to themſelves; and ſelf-love, that promoted union among men, promotes diſcord among them. Like the philoſopher of MALMESBURY's wild men, they act as if they had a right to all they can acquire by fraud or force: and a ſtate of war, ſo far from being the cauſe, has been the effect of forming diſtinct ſocieties, tho' by the general plan of nature the propagation of mankind makes it neceſſary to form them. Such is our inconſiſtency, ſuch are the contradictions that unite in the human character.

HOBBES, and CUMBERLAND in oppoſition to him, have ſaid much about the ſocieties of ants and bees. I ſhall compare them with thoſe of men no further, than the compariſon is immediately appoſite to my preſent purpoſe. The bees then, for it will be enough to ſpeak of one ſpecies, and the compariſon will hold beſt with that of which we have moſt

experience; the bees, I ſay, co-operate viſibly to one end, the general good of their reſpective communities, not by choice, nor compact, moſt probably, nor by authority neither, for their monarchs have no ſtings to puniſh the diſobedient or the lazy; but by one invariable and conſtant direction, that of inſtinct. If reaſon could ſupply the place of inſtinct, be always at hand, and determine with as much force, men might be as good citizens as bees. But the rational creatures neglect their reaſon, or degrade her, in the intellectual œconomy, and make her the vile inſtrument of their appetites and paſſions. This is ſo much the caſe, that men would have been what HOBBES aſſumes that they were, if the divine wiſdom had not conſtituted them ſo that they are, as ſoon as they come into the world, members of ſocieties which are formed by inſtinct and improved by reaſon. What reaſon cannot do by herſelf, ſhe does in ſome degree by the adventitious helps which experience enables her to acquire, by orders and rules of government which every man concurs to maintain; becauſe every man is willing to controul the paſſions and reſtrain the exceſſes of others, whatever indulgence he has for his own. I ſaid, in ſome degree; for, even with theſe adventitious helps, reaſon preſerves human ſocieties unequally, and by a perpetual conflict: whereas inſtinct preſerves thoſe of bees in one uniform tenor, and without any conflict at all. The paſſions rebel againſt reaſon: but inſtinct is reaſon and paſſion both.

THUS bees live with bees in their ſeveral hives, and have much advantage over men in domeſtic life. But their ſociability goes no further. Whenever any of theſe families, for to ſuch they may be compared, tranſmigrate or ſend out colonies to ſeek new habitations, cruel wars enſue, if you will take the word of VIRGIL, as good a naturaliſt at leaſt as HOMER,

HOMER, for it. I have read ſomewhere, that ORIGEN thought GOD had thus determined them, to ſet an example of making war to men. I had rather believe the father miſunderſtood or belied; and aſſume, that the ſame inſtinct governs theſe animals no longer, when they forſake the hives; ſo that their own ferocity, or that of their kings, carries them to all the exceſſes of inſociability. Every king is a JOSUAH, or an ATTILA, and under his command

" corpora bello
" Objectant, pulchramque petunt per vulnera mortem."

As long as he lives there is no compoſition, no peace, no truce to be had. They fight " uſque ad internecionem." As ſoon as he falls, they plunder their common hive, and the family or little ſtate is diſſolved.

" Rege incolumi, mens omnibus una eſt.
" Amiſſo, rupere fidem, conſtructaque mella
" Diripuere ipſæ, et crates ſolvere favorum."

IT is not quite the ſame in the caſe of mankind. Their families or hords, and the colonies they ſend out, unite ſometimes for mutual utility with others, as I have hinted. Reaſon, which had co-operated with inſtinct before, takes the place of it now. They coalite amicably by covenants, they make laws by common conſent, and from being members of a natural, they become ſuch of a political ſociety. It ſeems, however, that theſe political ſocieties have been more frequently formed by compoſitions after wars, by a forced ſubmiſſion to the law of conquerors, and by aſſociations made to prevent conqueſt. We eaſily conceive that the inſociability of families made the ſtrongeſt invade the weakeſt, and the weakeſt

unite againſt the ſtrongeſt. When larger communities were thus formed, the ſame inſociability, and therefore the ſame policy, continued; ſo that fear may be ſaid to have been a principal inducement in this manner to mankind, not to form ſocieties, as it has been underſtood, but to ſubmit to civil government.

Communities, formed by the union of different families, were not only more numerous than any particular families, but they were compoſed of heterogeneous parts, of members unconnected by conſanguinity, or the habit of living together, and connected only by accidental circumſtances, and the tye of covenants. Theſe circumſtances, or the diſpoſitions they had produced, might alter; and the tye of covenants, without a ſupreme power to enforce the obſervation of them, could not hold. Paternal authority, therefore, which had been ſufficient to maintain, in ſome degree, peace and good order in ſocieties compoſed of a few, and thoſe few members of the ſame family as well as of the ſame ſociety, might be inſufficient, on both theſe accounts, to maintain the ſame degree of peace and good order in communities more numerous, and incorporated rather by art or by force, than by nature. Thus it became neceſſary to eſtabliſh a power ſuperior to that of the fathers of families, and, as faſt as men went out of the ſtate of nature, to ſubſtitute artificial to natural government. This was not done all at once, I ſuppoſe, nor every where in the ſame manner. But it ſeems moſt probable that theſe governments were in general monarchical. I know that ſome writers have thought otherwiſe; but they have no more right to affirm than I have, who am far from affirming. We muſt all gueſs, and probabilities muſt be weighed. It has been ſaid, "that when men, who were in a ſtate of natural freedom "and natural equality, reſolved by common conſent to ſub-

"mit

" mit themſelves to civil government, they choſe the democra-
" tical form, in order to keep this government in their own
" hands; and that the fathers of families, who had been uſed to
" independency, muſt have concurred in the ſame choice *."
Now the very reverſe of this ſeems more probable to me. The fathers of families, who could not all be kings upon this change, would have preferred ariſtocracy to democracy, and the multitude would have preferred monarchy to both. The former would have been deſirous to retain ſome image of their antient authority, and the latter would have ſlided into a form of government that reſembled the paternal, to which they had been accuſtomed, much more eaſily than they would have conſtituted one entirely new, and the nature of which, for want of experience, would not have been very obvious to their apprehenſion. This eaſy tranſition, from paternal government to monarchical, ſeems to have been very well underſtood by LYCURGUS, who, when he was adviſed to eſtabliſh a popular government in Sparta, bid his adviſer try in the firſt place to eſtabliſh democracy in his own family †. One may conceive equally well how monarchy changed, by the abuſe of power, into ariſtocracy, or democracy; and how theſe changed, by the uſurpation of power, into monarchy. But the moſt antient traditions, and the authority of antient writers, I think, concur in eſtabliſhing this matter of fact, that monarchy, I do not ſay abſolute monarchy nor tyranny, was the firſt form of civil government. There are many paſſages to this purpoſe that might be collected, if it was worth my while. But there is one in the beginning of ARISTOTLE's Politics ſo much in point that it muſt by no means be omitted. He ſays, " that regal government was the firſt; becauſe they,
" who by their uniting formed the firſt ſtates, had been be-

* PUFF. L. vii. c. 5. † PLUT. in Vita LYCUR.

" fore

" fore that time under the ſame regimen in families, which " they afterwards continued in kingdoms."

I KNOW that the power of theſe kings was limited, as their kingdoms were ſmall, in the heroical ages. But ſtill they were kings, and not the leſs, but the more properly and the more truly ſuch, becauſe they were reſtrained from being tyrants. When JUSTIN ſays, that in the beginning of things the government of people and nations was monarchical [a], he confirms the opinion I am of. When he ſays that the people were bound by no laws, and that the will of princes held the place of laws [b], we muſt not imagine that theſe firſt monarchies were governments of mere will [c]. The tenor of tradition contradicts any ſuch propoſition. I might qnote the authority of THUCYDIDES, and others, againſt it; but I chooſe to quote that of JUSTIN himſelf againſt it, who ſays, in the ſame place, that it was not ambition, but a moderation tried and approved by all good men, that raiſed up princes to this dignity [d]. Thus the Medes, weary of that anarchy into which their families were fallen, choſe DEJOCES, a man famous for wiſdom, integrity, and juſtice, to be their king. It was not by virtue of their royal prerogative that theſe firſt kings gave laws written or unwritten, permanent or occaſional; for it is probable, that in thoſe antient days there were few or no written bodies of law: and you can tell better than I can, whether HOMER once mentions the word in his poems. But however this might be, the firſt kings had neither arbitrary nor legiſlative power by virtue of any real prerogative; on the contrary, they were choſen kings, becauſe they were choſen legiſlators, and the goodneſs of their laws recommended them

a) Principio rerum, gentium nationumque imperium penes reges erat.
b) Populus nullis legibus tenebatur, arbitria principum pro legibus erant.
c) Juſt. l. i. c. i. d)——Quos ad faſtigium hujus majeſtatis non ambitio popularis, ſed ſpectata inter bonos moderatio, provehebat. ib.

to

to the throne, and maintained them in it. The power of making laws was ſo far from being originally, and excluſively, annexed to monarchy, tho' it ſometimes made monarchs, that DRACO, who never was one, impoſed his laws, which were ſaid to be writ in blood becauſe of their extreme ſeverity, on the Athenians; that SOLON, who never would be one, repealed theſe laws, and eſtabliſhed others; and that PISISTRATUS, who made himſelf one, far from repealing thoſe of SOLON, governed by them. The firſt kings were limited monarchs. They earned the ſovereignty by great and good actions, held it from their people, and were accountable to their people for the exerciſe of it. Such I mean as came to their crowns by conſent, and in countries where common utility united families in civil ſociety, and neither conqueſt nor the fear of it.

XII.

THE attempts which ſo many learned and ingenious men have made, with infinite labor of ſtudy, to fix points of chronology and hiſtory concerning antient nations, that of the Egyptians particularly, have ſeemed to me, ever ſince I knew what they are, extremely ridiculous. They have ſeemed ſo the more, becauſe ſome general and uſeful truths may be collected, without any trouble, from the broken and fabulous materials they employ with ſo much trouble, and to ſo little uſeful purpoſe. The original of the Egyptians and the order of their dynaſties will never be known. The moſt antient traditions, ſacred and prophane, ſuppoſing them all authentic, would be ſtill inſufficient for this end. But they are ſufficient for another. They ſhew us the nature of government, and the character of mankind, in thoſe early ages. They ſhew us the firſt kings, and the primitive government of Egypt, ſuch as I have deſcribed; and ſuch they continued to be as

long as their gods reigned, that is, as long as their kings purſued the true ends of their inſtitution, and made their glory conſiſt in the good government of their own people, not in the conqueſt of others*. Osiris and Isis civiliſed their manners, and taught them to ſow corn and to plant the vine. The firſt Mercury taught them the uſe of letters, inſtructed them in the ſciences, and in arts, in that of phyſic eſpecially, both for the body and the mind, and was, beſides, their firſt or greateſt legiſlator. Other Mercuries ſucceeded Thot. Cotta makes them five in all †. Theſe explained the hieroglyphics of the firſt, improved on what he had taught in ſix and thirty thouſand volumes or rolls, as ſome legends affirm, and completed that wiſdom of the Egyptians wherein Moses was inſtructed; for no man, except a few, will believe that the daughter of Pharaoh ſent into Greece to procure preceptors for her foundling.

The Egyptians were little known to the Greeks, from whom all our knowledge of them is derived, till the reign of Psammetichus, much more than a thouſand years after the dynaſties of their gods, and their golden age, as we may call it; and yet even then, the firſt principles of good policy and of a limited monarchy ſubſiſted. They pierced thro' various revolutions of government, and maintained themſelves in reverence during an immenſe number of years. The ſame thing has happened, and by the ſame means, among the Chineſe, whom I might have quoted for the ſame purpoſe as I quote the former; ſince their empire began as early, has laſted near three thouſand years longer, and reſembles that of Egypt in many reſpects; in theſe particularly, in a great reverence for antiquity, in a ſtrong attachment to thoſe primitive inſtitutions

* Fines imperii tueri, magis quam proferre, mos erat. Intra ſuam cuique patriam regna finiebantur. Just. ubi ſupra. † Apud Cicer. de Nat. Deor.

by which the order of their government has been preſerved, their monarchs, how abſolute ſoever they may appear, have been reſtrained in the exerciſe of their power.

Now theſe governments, like all others which men have inſtituted, and to which they have ſubmitted by conſent, tho' they are artificial, are however inſtituted by virtue of the law of our nature, and are, in this ſenſe, of divine appointment. That ſovereignty, or ſupremacy, for ſuch it may be called in a true ſenſe, which was at firſt in fathers of families, not for their ſakes, but for the ſake of their offspring, and the propagation of the human ſpecies, belongs to one ſovereign or ſupreme magiſtrate; to more than one, to the collective or repreſentative body of the people; and ſometimes to all theſe, according to the various conſtitutions of civil governments, which were indifferent before they were made, but ceaſe to be ſo, and are obligatory on every member of the community, afterwards. There muſt be an abſolute power in every civil ſociety placed ſomewhere. As it is placed in one man, or in more, a monarchy ariſes, or an ariſtocracy, or a democracy: and, when it is divided between all theſe, a mixed government, which is, I preſume, the beſt of the four. By this repreſentation, ſo evidently true that no man who is in his wits can doubt of it, we may learn to deſpiſe and abhor certain venal or ſtupid writers in favor of monarchy. Some of theſe would perſuade, like FILMER, that ADAM was an abſolute monarch by creation; that his right has deſcended to kings; that all other men are ſlaves by birth, and never had a right to chooſe either forms of government or governors. Some again would perſuade, like HORNIUS, whom PUFFENDORF* cites and refutes, that altho' men have a right to make co-

* Lib. vii. c. iii.

venants, and conſtitute civil governments, they have no power to confer ſovereignty on princes. They may chooſe a king to govern them, that is, they may name a perſon on whom this ſovereignty, this majeſty, this power to govern which they cannot give, will deſcend, by a ſort of divine emanation, from GOD, who can alone give them. FILMER's hypotheſis will be always lame as well as abſurd, till ADAM's right heirs, for all other princes are by this hypotheſis no better than uſurpers, can be certainly diſtinguiſhed. They would be ſo by HARRY MARTIN's expedient, if they were born with combs on their heads, and every other man with a bunch on his back. But nothing of this kind has yet appeared among the phænomena of nature, and till it does we muſt content ourſelves to acknowledge ſuch kings as we have. The hypotheſis of HORNIUS does not expoſe us to the ſame uncertainty, and we may know our king by much the ſame rule by which the Tartarians know their god. When a king is choſen, ſovereignty and majeſty deſcend immediately upon him, and he is completely a king. When a great lama is choſen, the ſoul of FOE enters immediately into him, and he is completely a god. There are many more fooliſh and knaviſh hypotheſes of the ſame kind; and the principal promoters of them, in every country, have been the clergy, whoſe flattery to princes had well nigh ſucceeded among us, ſo as to make the cauſe of tyranny, what it has been, and ſtill continues to be made in other nations, the cauſe of GOD. But tho' we believe that monarchy was the firſt form of civil government, and that paternal government might lead men to it; yet may we believe very conſiſtently, and we muſt believe, unleſs we reſolve to believe againſt fact and reaſon both, that this, like every other form of government, is of human inſtitution, eſtabliſhed by the people, and for the people; and that no other majeſty, ſince the word impoſes ſo much, is inherent in it than that which belongs

to the ſupreme power of every ſtate, wherever that power is placed. Natural government was deſigned to laſt, and did laſt, till civil government became neceſſary. Nature inſtituted one, and directed human reaſon to the other. She meaned the ſame in both caſes, the good of the governed. Her inſtitution and her direction could not have different ends. She intended, no doubt, that they who had been treated like children, under the influence of inſtinct, ſhould be treated ſo likewiſe, under the influence of reaſon.

XIII.

I HAVE ſaid thus much, in order to ſhew that political ſocieties grew out of natural, and that civil governments were formed not by the concurrence of individuals, but by the aſſociations of families. It is the more neceſſary to repeat and to inculcate this diſtinction, becauſe, for want of making it, and by repreſenting mankind to themſelves like a number of ſavage individuals out of all ſociety in their natural ſtate, inſtead of conſidering them as members of families from their birth, and ſuch too long to be at any time the ſolitary vagabonds of the other hypotheſis, our beſt writers, even Mr. HOOKER, and much more Mr. LOCKE, have reaſoned both inconſiſtently, and on a falſe foundation. Inconſiſtently, becauſe they ſometimes acknowledge paternal government to have preceded civil, and yet reaſon about the inſtitution of civil, as if men had been then firſt aſſembled in any kind of ſociety, or had been ſubject to any kind of rule; for to ſay that the law of nature was of itſelf ſuch a rule, and that every one of theſe independent inhabitants of the earth did, or might exerciſe juſtice for himſelf and others, on thoſe who violated this law, was language unworthy of Mr. LOCKE, and unneceſ-

ſary

ſary to his ſyſtem, and yet it is the language of his ſecond chapter in his ſecond book of civil government. Falſely, becauſe it is eaſy to demonſtrate that mankind never was in ſuch a ſtate of nature as theſe authors generally, the beſt and the worſt, have aſſumed, by demonſtrating that the generations of men could not have been continued in ſuch a ſtate. It is impoſſible we ſhould know, by hiſtory or tradition, how the firſt civil governments were eſtabliſhed. It is ſo impoſſible, that if any hiſtory or tradition pretended to give ſuch relations, they would loſe deſervedly all credit for this very reaſon. But we may gueſs with great probability, by analogy from what we know; and we may reject without preſumption the whimſies, that ſpeculative men invent in contradiction to this analogy, and to the viſible conſtitution of human nature. "If we "may not ſuppoſe men ever to have been in the ſtate of nature," ſays Mr. LOCKE*, "becauſe we hear not much of them in ſuch "a ſtate, we may as well ſuppoſe the armies of SALMANASSER "or XERXES were never children, becauſe we hear little of them "till they were men, and embodied in armies." But with ſubmiſſion to this great author, the compariſon is not at all to his purpoſe, nor helps him in the leaſt to anſwer the objection he ſuppoſed might be made to him. No man would be mad enough, moſt certainly, to deny that all theſe ſoldiers had been once children, tho' he neither knew them nor had ever heard of them in their childhood. But, to make the compariſon appoſite, no man ſhould be able to affirm that all theſe ſoldiers had been members of other communities before they were embodied in theſe armies. The queſtion is not, whether men lived together in the ſtate of nature ſince the world was their common habitation, but, what the ſtate of nature was, whether it was compoſed of men who lived together in families, and

* Civ. Gov. c. viii.

whether

whether these families, by uniting together, gave a beginning to political societies; or whether it was composed of as many solitary individuals as there were men in the world, and whether these men, independent and equal one amongst another, met amicably together, and set up government without any better preparation for it.

LOCKE insists much on the natural equality and freedom of mankind; but he seems to carry his notions on the subject a little further than nature, and the reason of things, will allow. We may distinguish a personal and a social equality. Nature has been far from constituting the first, and the creatures of no other species are probably so unequal in this respect as those of the human. The utmost efforts of art cannot give them even the appearances of equality. But nature has really, if not so apparently, constituted the last; for the father was a son, and the son will be a father; the magistrate might have been a subject, and the subject a magistrate. Nature has determined nothing in these cases, and therefore these last destinations, when they are made with a partial inequality in these societies of men, are due solely to the folly of men, to their neglect of natural indications, not to the indications of nature, and to the imperfection of all human establishments; so that the reverse of them would take effect, for the most part, if the indications of nature were observed and followed. He who sits on a throne would inhabit a cottage, and he who holds a plough would weild a sceptre.

THAT all men are born to be free, is undoubtedly true; and therefore I think, that they never were in such a state of nature as LOCKE assumes*. His state of perfect freedom, so he calls

* Ib. c. ii.

it,

it, would have been a ſtate of war and violence, of mutual and alternate oppreſſion, as really as that which HOBBES imagined to have been the ſtate of nature. He diſtinguiſhes, indeed, between liberty and licence, and ſuppoſes a law of nature in force to reſtrain the latter. But as he ſuppoſes, at the ſame time, that every man had an equal right to be the executioner of this law, as well as the judge, and to puniſh the offenders againſt it, not only for his own preſervation, but in order to preſerve mankind in general, it is plain that this hypotheſis implies the ſame abſurdities as the other, and that the ſtate of mankind under the law of nature, according to LOCKE, would have been very little, if at all, better than the ſtate of nature before there was any ſuch thing as law, according to HOBBES. The pretence of law in one, would have done as much hurt as the want of it in the other; and it is eaſy to conceive what tyranny and oppreſſion would have prevailed univerſally, if every man, beſides being judge in his own cauſe, had been an univerſal judge and executioner.

Mr. LOCKE doubted not but his doctrine would ſeem very ſtrange to ſome men; and, in truth, they muſt be very ſtrange men to whom it does not appear ſuch. He aſks, however, before it be condemned, to have this queſtion reſolved, by what right princes or ſtates can put to death or puniſh an alien for any crime he commits in their countries? The alien is not ſubject to their laws. They muſt puniſh him, therefore, by the law of nature; and, if by the law of nature every man hath not power to puniſh offences againſt it, he does not ſee how the magiſtrates of any community can puniſh an alien. This is the queſtion, this the argument; and a ſufficient anſwer may be given to both, without conſulting GROTIUS, PUFFENDORF, or any of the oracles of law. Tho' an alien does not owe allegiance to the ſovereign power of the country wherein he is

is an alien, becauſe two diſtinct allegiances cannot be due from the ſame perſon at the ſame time; yet he is under the protection of that government, and a ſubject of it who ſhould rob or murder him would be puniſhed by the laws of it. He is therefore liable to be puniſhed by the ſame laws, and it is not true that they who make them and they who execute them are to him, in ſuch caſes as theſe, men without authority. The laws that concern men as denizens only concern him not, for he enjoys none of the advantages peculiarly and excluſively attributed to denizens. But the laws that are neceſſary to preſerve the peace and good order of a community concern every man who lives in it, and the alien ſubmits himſelf voluntarily to them when he reſolves to do ſo. He can be entituled to protection on no other condition. He accepts this condition: he is puniſhable therefore by his own conſent, and the municipal laws, not the laws of nature alone, condemn him juſtly. But if the former did not ſpeak to him, if he was not bound to hearken to them, as Locke affirms too generally and too raſhly, would there be no difference between the right which he aſſumes to belong to every man by nature of puniſhing offences againſt her laws, as this man ſoberly judges the caſe to require, and that right which a court of juſtice has to proceed by ſtated rules, that reaſon authoriſes, and general conſent approves, againſt an alien who violates at once the particular laws of a community and the univerſal laws of nature? Would there be ſo little difference that one could not ſtand without the other, nor the conduct of princes and ſtates in puniſhing aliens in theſe caſes be juſtified, unleſs this ſtrange doctrine were admitted? I think no man who is capable of reflection will be of this mind. But thus it happens to men of the greateſt genius, when they grow to be overfond of an hypotheſis. They purſue the trains of their abſtract, that is their general ideas, wherever theſe carry them.

Thus they are led to maintain propoſitions ſo little conformable to the real conſtitution of things, that he who reaſons leſs on general notions, and confines himſelf more to obſerve this conſtitution in every particular, will have frequent occaſions to diſcern a wide difference between the ſpeculations of philoſophers and the original invariable ſyſtem of nature.

I AM not as much perſuaded as Mr. LOCKE was, that all political ſocieties began from a voluntary union. Many of them did, and I think that this union was a voluntary union of families in ſocieties that may be called legal, becauſe they were made according to natural and divine appointment; for thoſe, that may be called illegal, will fall under another conſideration. I think thus becauſe the moſt early traditions, and the moſt antient as well as modern hiſtories, even thoſe that are cited to prove the contrary, ſhew me mankind not only in their childhood, but in their manhood, aſſembled in families before they were ſo in civil ſocieties. JOSEPH ACOSTA, who is cited by LOCKE, ſays, "there was "reaſon to conjecture, that the people of PERU had neither "kings nor commonwealths for a long time." But how did they live during this time? Were they ſo many individuals ſcattered about the country without any form or appearance of ſociety? By no means. They lived in troops, as they do at this day in Florida, and we know how the people of Florida and North-America live at this day, by a multitude of perſons, miſſionaries, and others, who all repreſent them as tribes or families, that obſerve the precepts and cuſtoms of their anceſtors, that have public aſſemblies for conſultation wherein their elders preſide, and that give the ſupreme command over them, in time of war at leaſt, to perſons they elect, as other ſavages ſubmit to the more permanent authority of their caciques. I think it evident beyond all contradiction, from obſerving the conſtitution of human nature, phyſical, and moral,

moral, that mankind could not have ſubſiſted, nor have been propagated, if men had been ever out of ſociety, and that having been educated till their years of diſcretion in it, tho' they might poſſibly but rarely change ſocieties, they would never go out of ſociety, nor could become ſuch unaſſociated independent creatures, as they are ſuppoſed to have been by the other hypotheſis, till they became members of ſome political ſociety. I think it eaſy to conceive how men were prepared, by living in natural, to live in political ſocieties, and impoſſible to conceive how ſtrolling ſavages, who knew no ſubordination, nor had been accuſtomed to obſerve any rules of ſocial life, could be picked up one by one, as it were, and reduced at once under the laws of any civil government. Whenever this was done, paternal authority had, no doubt, a great ſhare in determining their families to unite with one another; but if we believe that the conſent of every family was collectively taken, we ſhall aſſume no more than what is actually practiſed among the ſavages on every occaſion, of making war and peace, of huntings, and tranſmigrations from one ſettlement to another. In ſhort, I think, as tradition, hiſtory, an analogy to what paſſes in ſome ſort before our eyes, and the actual conſtitution of human nature lead me to think; whereas much abler men are led into different extremes, to ſupport different hypotheſes. To ſupport the divine right and abſolute power of kings, FILMER advanced the ſilly and ſlaviſh notion of royal fatherhood. Silly, indeed, as well as ſlaviſh, it muſt be reputed; ſince tho' the power of the father was, on many accounts, greater and laſted longer than that of the mother, and ſince he could not therefore have talked of royal motherhood, if it had ſerved his purpoſe, with as much ſeeming propriety as of royal fatherhood; yet is it certain that even the paternal was a temporary power, as it has been explained above, and that when it continued longer than the minority of children,

this was due to gratitude, to habitual reverence, or to circumſtances of conveniency, and, in no ſort, to any natural right that the father had. To deduce therefore from hence a right and power, ſuch as FILMER would aſcribe to kings, is perhaps one of the greateſt abſurdities that was ever committed to paper. A very commendable zeal to explode theſe falſe notions of government, and to aſſert the cauſe of liberty, carried LOCKE into another extreme, very unneceſſarily, as I apprehend. He aſſumed the ſtate of nature to be ſuch as could never exiſt, and the method of eſtabliſhing civil ſocieties to be ſuch as could never be executed. Will it be ſaid that he meaned only to give an abſtract ſyſtem of the natural rights of mankind? I ſhall aſk, if it be ſaid, to what purpoſe it was to make any abſtract ſyſtem of rights, that never did nor could exiſt, and of a method of eſtabliſhing civil government that never could be taken? It could ſerve ſurely no other purpoſe, than to give us a notion of natural liberty very different from the real conſtitution of nature, by which we are leſs able to preſerve liberty without ſome ſort or other of government, than we are liable to loſe it by the abuſe of government. I ſhall aſk, in the next place, whether the right of mankind to be governed by law, and not by will, under every form of civil government, be not as well eſtabliſhed by referring the original of all theſe forms to the conſent of men aſſembled in families, as to the conſent of men diſperſed, GOD knows why, after having been educated in one kind of ſociety, and aſſembled, GOD knows how, to eſtabliſh another.

XIV.

AS it is much more reaſonable to judge, in all caſes, by a conſideration of the actual conſtitution of human nature, than

than to run the riſk of miſtaking what is true by imagining what may be ſo; it is likewiſe both reaſonable and neceſſary, on the ſubject ſpoken of here, to look as far back as we have any light on the natural and political ſtate of mankind, in which review we ſhall find ſufficient inducements to think that the ſtate of nature was not a ſtate of anarchy but a ſtate of government, and that ſome form or other of it ſubſiſted at all times and in all places, however theſe forms may have varied. We diſtinguiſh between natural and political ſociety; but the real difference between them is not ſo great as we imagine. Nature inſtituted the former, but we cannot doubt that reaſon and experience improved it, without changing the form, from time to time, as the circumſtances of families altered. When theſe were altered ſo far that the ſame form would do no longer, men altered the form itſelf. They kept nearer to it in ſome ſocieties, and went further from it in others. The inſtitution ceaſed to be that of nature, it became that of art. But in all other reſpects there was no more reaſon, perhaps, to ſay, whenever and wherever this happened, for it would be ridiculous to aſſume that it happened every where at once, that a new ſtate of mankind aroſe in thoſe places and at thoſe times, than there has been to ſay ſo on every great revolution of government ſince, when monarchies have changed from elective to hereditary, when ariſtocracies or democracies have been raiſed on their ruin, or mixed governments on thoſe of all three.

Mention has been made of the Egyptians, who appear to have been, if any people we know of were ſuch, the Aborigines of their country. The accounts which hiſtory gives of their political conſtitution, and thoſe anecdotes which tradition has preſerved concerning the original of it, incline, and almoſt determine, one to think that it was formed in the manner

which has been assumed of forming political societies for mutual advantage, or common defence; that the union of families composed several small dynasties, and the union of dynasties one great empire; that it was so formed on principles of common utility, and without the insociable design of invading others, till SETHOSIS, or EGYPTUS, or SESOSTRIS and other conquerors arose, who invaded the nations of Africa, of Asia, and even of Europe, as the Ethiopians and Arabians invaded Egypt. The other great empire, the Babylonian or Assyrian, of which the Grecian antiquaries, who knew nothing of China, relate so many wonders, seems to have been formed in another manner.

LAWYERS speak of illegal communities of bodies of men who unite under certain conditions, and become societies to break all the rules of sociability; to rob, and to plunder, like the antient Greeks spoken of by THUCYDIDES, or the modern Arabs and Tartars. Some of these have never settled in civil governments. They have gathered from time to time, like vapors into clouds, have produced storms, marked their course by devastation, and done great, but transient, mischief. Other confederacies there have been, as illegal as these in their institution, designed to invade the possessions of others, and to form political societies by conquest against the laws of nature, instead of forming them by compact agreeably to it.

AS I assume with more probability on my side than such hypotheses have generally, that the reigns of the most antient kings of Egypt were called the reigns of the gods, on account of the wise laws and institutions by which they promoted the peace and happiness of that people; so we may assume, that the Assyrian empire was founded and supported, from the first, by violence. Who NIMROD was, or BELUS, or any of those

that have been named in the variety and uncertainty of traditions, among the founders of this empire, when they lived, and what they did, it is impoſſible to ſay. Even MARSHAM, who labored this point ſo much, with all his ſagacity, and all his learning, left it, as he found it, in the dark. But as NIMROD ſtands repreſented, in the moſaical hiſtory, a mighty hunter before the Lord, he gives us the idea of a warrior; and we may believe, without ſtraining the ſenſe of antient anecdotes too much, that BEL, BELUS, or BAAL, who was ſo ſanguinary a god, had not been a king of great moderation, nor had acquired power by perſuaſion rather than by force, by the arts of peace than by uſurpation and war. JUSTIN ſays, that NINUS was the firſt, not to make war, but to change the nature of it [a], and to extend his empire by ſubduing his neighbors. The Egyptian SESOSTRIS, and the Scythian TANAÜS much more antient, had made war for fame alone, and, content with victory, had abſtained from empire [b]. Their kingdoms, which each nation reputed to be the moſt antient of the world, and which were ſo perhaps of the world they knew, had been eſtabliſhed long before theſe wars begun. Arts and ſciences were more improved among the Egyptians: primitive ſimplicity among the Scythians. But it is probable, that neither of them engaged in wars, till ſelf-defence made them neceſſary, or till the ambition of their princes gave occaſion to them. Then SESOSTRIS harneſſed monarchs to his chariot. Then the Scythians impoſed a tribute on Aſia, rather as the trophy than the reward of their victory [c]. The firſt Aſſyrian kings, on the contrary, eſtabliſhed their monarchy by force, in an age when the illegal confederacy of a few families was ſufficient to give the moſt forward, and the moſt popular man amongſt them, the title of a mighty hunter, and the

a) Avitum gentium morem. b) Contenti victoriâ, imperio abſtinebant.
c) Magis in titulum imperii, quam in victoriæ præmium.

means

means of forming a political ſociety on a principle of ambition, and by uſurpation on the other little ſtates, unſkilled, and unable to reſiſt: "rudes ad reſiſtendum."

THERE muſt needs have been a multitude of numerous families, or little ſtates, in theſe early days, and in the countries we ſpeak of here, ſince JOSHUA conquered one and thirty kings in the land of Canaan. It is eaſy, therefore, to conceive how ſuch a man as we aſſume NIMROD to have been, on the authority of ſcripture, and BELUS after him, if they were different perſons, for that one was the SATURN and the other the JUPITER of the Greeks is not ſo very certain; that ſuch a man, I ſay, might unite by conſent both men and families of men, as fierce as himſelf, in confederacies to invade others. Whatever uſe they made of this, whether they contented themſelves to conquer and to ravage, or whether, as they had united by conſent, they obliged their neighbors to unite with them by force, it ſeems that NINUS profited of their ſucceſs to do the laſt. He extended his dominion by victory, and as he extended it, he confirmed it. Thus the babylonian empire was founded by force of arms, and thus it was maintained; till as force had raiſed it, force deſtroyed it, and illegal confederacies put an end to what illegal confederacies had begun.

IF we conſider the true ends of ſociety, to which the general nature and reaſon of things direct mankind, we ſhall find it hard to conceive how they could be induced to unite their families on any other motives than thoſe of common utility, and common defence, againſt the little robbers that have been mentioned; or how, when a ſuperior force made them ſafe from theſe, they ſhould chooſe to become great robbers themſelves, and to invade and conquer as if their happineſs had depended more on ſubduing other governments than on a wiſe

and

and juſt conſtitution of their own. But if we conſider the particular nature of man, wherein there is one principle that directs him agreeably to the general law of nature, and another which is nothing more than the impulſe of appetites and paſſions that are of ſubordinate uſe in the human œconomy, but were not deſigned to be the laws of it, we ſhall eaſily conceive how the conduct of mankind has become in theſe caſes, and almoſt in all others, repugnant to nature, reaſon, and their own common ſenſe.

The firſt impreſſions that are made on ſocieties, like thoſe on particular men, laſt long, and the worſt longeſt. The character of a few eminent perſons, nay of ſome one who has acquired fame, authority, and power, eſpecially if he has had the legiſlative in matters religious as well as civil, becomes that of a nation, grows confirmed by cuſtom, and paſſes for natural and reaſonable in deſpite of nature and reaſon. This happens in particular ſtates, and this has happened in the great commonwealth of mankind. If ſome men have been deified for the good, many have been ſo for the hurt they did; and conquerors, the moſt noxious of all animals, have become objects of adoration. However unlike nations may be to nations in their diſpoſitions and manners, all of them, even the weakeſt, ſeek their own advantage real or imaginary, at the expence of others. Thus have the civil ſocieties of men acted towards one another from their primitive inſtitution; for if ſome ſet the example, the others ſoon followed it, and whilſt every particular ſtate has gone thro' various forms of government and revolutions of fortune, the univerſal ſtate of mankind has been little leſs than a ſtate of perpetual anarchy. Families kept men out of that ſtate of individuality which Hobbes, and even Locke, ſuppoſes. But political ſocieties have been always individuals.

XV.

BESIDES the two manners that have been mentioned, in which civil ſocieties were formed, there was a third very near a kin to the ſecond, that came into frequent uſe, when the numbers of people increaſed in ſome countries faſter than their induſtry, and the order of their government made proviſion for them; or when, for ſome other reaſon, the greateſt part of a community, and the ſovereign power in it reſolved to drive out a ſmaller part that they judged noxious to the whole. This manner of eſtabliſhing new governments when it was done by force, and it was ſeldom done with the conſent of the invaded, was full as illegal, relatively to the law of nature, in the invaders, however ſoftened by pretences of neceſſity, as the ſecond. It was more bloody too, when they who defended their antient poſſeſſions were more able to reſiſt, and they who ſought new habitations were more numerous than either of them had been, when kingdoms and ſtates were firſt formed, and colonies were firſt planted. The Inhabitants of Gaul were grown ſo numerous, that in the very beginning of the Roman empire, in the reign of the elder TARQUIN, the Celtic Gauls, who ſacked Rome two hundred years afterwards, began to ſend their colonies abroad, at the inſtigation of their king AMBIGATUS*. He thought it neceſſary to exonerate his kingdom over crowded with people, "exonerare prægravante turbâ regnum." He authoriſed the expeditions, by ſetting his nephews at the head of them, by giving them commiſſions to ſettle wherever the gods ſhould direct by auguries, "in quas dii dediſſent auguriis ſedes," and

* LIV. lib. v.

by levying ſuch formidable armies for this purpoſe as no nation ſhould be able to reſiſt, " ne quæ gens arcere advenien-
" tes poſſet." This account, that LIVY gives of the Celtic invaſions, may ſerve, in ſome ſort, for thoſe which other nations made on the Roman provinces, long after his time, and in the decline of that empire. The Oſtrogoths, the Viſigoths, the Vandals, and the Lombards, to whom the Franks, altho' an aſſemblage of adventurers perhaps, rather than one people, may be added, were the principal nations, who broke down the barriers of the Roman empire, and who eſtabliſhed themſelves in ſeveral provinces on the ruins of it. They were all detached to ſeek new habitations, from the various and numberleſs families and ſocieties of people who inhabited Scythia, that is the immenſe extent of country beyond the Rhine and the Danube, as far as the Baltic northward, and the Euxine and the Caſpian, at leaſt, eaſtward. We know little about them, whilſt they remained in their deſerts, and that little is very confuſed, and no doubt very fabulous. But this in general is certain, their numbers increaſed ſo much in every ſociety, and the fertility of the country, which every ſociety poſſeſſed, as well as their ſkill to improve it, was ſo little proportionable to the wants of ſuch numbers, that they were continually ſending forth new colonies to ſeek new habitations, one at the expence of the other, driving and driven out by turns. The ſame neceſſity, and the ſame habits of invading continued when the Roman empire, divided by CONSTANTINE, and weakened by his Chriſtian ſucceſſors, was no longer able to repel their incurſions. They had too, beſides neceſſity, another ſtrong temptation at this time. The expeditions they undertook, were in themſelves more inviting than any of the former, " haud paulò lætiorem
" viam dii dabant," as LIVY ſays, when he compares that of BELOVESUS into Italy, with that of SIGOVESUS into the Hercynian foreſt. They removed to better climates, to countries more

fruitful, or more cultivated, as well as more adorned than their own; and the ſurpriſe of ATHANARICUS, king of the Viſigoths, who had made a peace with GRATIAN for preſents, and principally for victuals, when he came to Conſtantinople, at the invitation of THEODOSIUS, is nothing leſs than ſurpriſing, altho' JORNANDES deſcribes it to have been extreme.

A MULTITUDE of examples might be brought of kingdoms and ſtates, that aroſe from ſuch tranſmigrations as theſe, of Greeks, of Phœnicians, and of other people. Sometimes they were formed by agreement, a few inſtances of which are to be found in hiſtory and tradition, but much oftener by violence, and ſometimes by ſuch circumſtances of cruelty as were ſufficient to exterminate the lawful poſſeſſors; one inſtance of which, beſides thoſe already pointed out, requires a particular mention in this place. It is not only to be reputed more authentic than any other, becauſe it makes a part, and a principal part of ſacred hiſtory, but it is more full and more marvellous in all the particular circumſtances of it, and ſhews another occaſion, beſides that of a too great increaſe of people, on which one part of a community was deſirous to ſeek out new habitations, or was compelled to it by the other. The wandering family of ABRAHAM, that had hovered long about Egypt, and had gone thither often for bread, to the want of which theſe paſtors were much expoſed, ſettled in that country at laſt, under the protection of JOSEPH, and continued in it above two centuries. That they did not attempt to eſtabliſh a government of their own in it, like other ſtrangers who came from barren into fruitful countries, is eaſily accounted for by the ſmallneſs of their number, as well as by the ſituation of JOSEPH, and their relation to him. But it is not ſo eaſy to account for the patience with which they bore, after the death of JOSEPH, a cruel ſervitude of fourſcore years, to which the

tyranny of the Egyptians had reduced them, when their number increaſed in every generation ſo vaſtly, that they could bring, at the time of the Exode, ſix hundred thouſand fighting men into the field. This very increaſe might ſeem incredible in any other hiſtory, notwithſtanding the calculations that have been made, to ſhew that it does not exceed the natural multiplication of a people, among whom polygamy and concubinage are eſtabliſhed. But admitting theſe immenſe numbers, and this extreme patience of the Iſraelites, naturally impatient, raſh, and unruly, to be conſiſtent; admitting that the expectation of a promiſed land, whereof their father ABRAHAM had taken poſſeſſion for them, by erecting altars in it, as the Spaniſh adventurers took poſſeſſion of ſeveral countries in America, by erecting croſſes in them, which they conquered afterwards, and claimed by virtue of this right of poſſeſſion to belong to them; admitting this expectation, I ſay, as an additional reaſon why the Iſraelites ſubmitted to their bondage ſo long, and made no attempt to eſtabliſh an independent kingdom or commonwealth in Egypt; yet will it be hard to conceive how they could find it ſo difficult to withdraw themſelves out of this country, when MOSES determined them to it. An army of ſix hundred thouſand men was ſufficient to have conquered Egypt. The Arabians probably, and the Perſians certainly conquered it with a leſs force than they might have employed merely to march out of it.

SUCH conſiderations may lead one to think, that the accounts pagan authors give of their Exode are not wholly fabulous, and that it is an example in point of the caſe I aſſumed, the caſe of people driven out of ſome communities, becauſe they were for ſome reaſon or other not only burthenſome but noxious to them. The Iſraelites were not guilty of ſedition nor rebellion. They bore their ſtripes patiently. But as their ſtripes made

made them willing to leave the country, an epidemical infectious diſtemper in the lower Egypt might make PHARAOH deſirous to drive the inhabitants of that part of his kingdom, into the neighbouring deſerts; and if he followed them to the Red Sea, it might be rather to recover the jewels, and the veſſels of gold, and ſilver, which they had ſtole under the pretence of borrowing, than to ſtop them and to bring them back. TERTULLIAN * has preſerved a tradition which favors this ſuppoſition; for he relates that the Egyptians ſent meſſengers to MOSES in the deſert to demand reſtitution, that the Iſraelites on their ſide demanded to be paid for their labor whilſt in ſervitude, and that an account being ſtated, the ballance ſeemed to be much in favor of the latter. Thus you ſee that the Egyptians robbed the Iſraelites, not the Iſraelites the Egyptians, as it has been thought.

MR. SELDEN has given us the ſame ſtory †, and two others, as they are told with ſome little difference in the Babylonian Gemara, and a book called Bereſith Rabba. This over-learned writer does not decide whether the facts are true, or whether they are rabinical inventions, "ingenii rabinici figmenta." They deſerve, however, to be mentioned, becauſe of their immediate relation to the anecdote juſt now quoted from TERTULLIAN, and to the right the Iſraelites had to the land of Canaan. The anecdote is much the ſame. The ſcene where it paſſed, and the perſons among whom, are alone changed. JOSEPHUS, and others after him, and like him, have founded high the reverence and munificence, "reverentiam atque mu-" nificentiam", ſays SELDEN, which ALEXANDER THE GREAT ſhewed to JADDUS the high prieſt, and to the whole nation of

* Adv. Marcionem, Lib. ii. c. 20.
† De jure Nat. & Gent. juxta diſcip. Ebræor. Lib. vii. c. 8.

the

the Jews, when he received them under his protection, for they purchased his protection, much as the priests of JUPITER HAMMON did, one by flattering prophecies, the other by a flattering genealogy. Three controversies, then, were decided in their favor at the tribunal of this prince against the Egyptians, the Africans, and the Ismaelites, or Arabs, according to the rabbins, those great compilers of Jewish traditions. The Egyptians demanded restitution of the silver and gold which they had lent the Israelites about a thousand years before at the time of their Exode, and insisted on the passage where MOSES says, that GOD gave his people favor in the eyes of the Egyptians*. But GIBEAH BEN PESISA, the famous lawyer, who was council on the other side, pleaded that six hundred thousand of the Israelites, having served the Egyptians four hundred and thirty years, the former had a just demand on the latter for this service; and this debt, which was computed for a time so much longer than that of the bondage of the people of Israel, and for numbers so much greater than theirs at any time perhaps, but certainly during the far greatest part of the time, that they were even known to the Egyptians; this debt, I say, we may well believe exceeded the value of a few jewels, and vessels of gold and silver, and some raiment, or old cloaths, that they carried away with them. In short, the Egyptians were condemned, in this suit, at ALEXANDER's tribunal. So were the Africans who demanded the land of Canaan, as the estate of their father CANAAN, and therefore their inheritance. The lawyer of the Jews quoted the curse, pronounced against the son of HAM, more unfortunate than guilty; asked, if the possessions of slaves did not belong to their masters; insisted that the Africans were still such to his clients in equity, tho' not in fact, and sent them away in confusion. The cause of

* Deum dedisse gratiam populo in oculis Ægyptiorum, ut postulata concederent eis, seu mutuo darent quæ ipsi peterent.

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the Iſmaelites who pretended to be co-heirs with the Iſraelites came on laſt, but they were ſoon ſilenced by producing the will of ABRAHAM, as MOSES recorded it, and in which the patriarch gives all his eſtate to ISAAC, except ſome legacies to the children he had by his concubines. Well might SELDEN ſay, that theſe ſuits were of a wonderful nature, "miræ ſunt "hae diſceptationes forenſes," wherein both ſides agreed to have the cauſe decided by arguments drawn from the law of the Jews, from their hiſtory, and from their interpretations of both, without any regard to a preſcription of ſo many ages. But it is time that I return to ſpeak of the manner in which the Iſraelites proceeded in the acquiſition of new habitations, and in forming not only one commonwealth the more in the world, but the moſt ſingular eſtabliſhment eccleſiaſtical and civil that ever was formed; for ſuch it muſt be allowed to have been, unleſs any one ſhall think that it appears to us more ſingular than it really was, becauſe we do not know all, as we know ſome of the laws, cuſtoms, and pretenſions of other antient nations.

WHEN I include with the Iſraelites in this tranſmigration, many of the other inhabitants of the lower Egypt, and ſuppoſe that a common diſtemper rather than a common religion, unleſs that religion was idolatry, united them in it, nothing is aſſumed unreaſonably, as every one, who conſiders how little fit the Iſraelites, ſo prone to idolatry themſelves, were to convert others from it, muſt agree. But whatever the religion of his mixed multitude of Iſraelites and Egyptians was, before they put themſelves under the conduct of MOSES, they became the ſame people in this, and in every other reſpect afterwards. They entertained the ſame hopes, and marched with confidence under the ſame leader to conquer new habitations. Well might they march with this confidence, when miracles accompanied them

them in one continued ſeries, and it is even ſurpriſing that they ſhould deſpond at any time, after the firſt miracle had been wrought at the paſſage of the Red Sea, tho' JOSEPHUS goes out of his character on this occaſion, and inſtead of magnifying diminiſhes the wonder, by comparing this paſſage to that of ALEXANDER's army, who marched on the ſtrand, or waded thro' ſhallow water along the Pamphilian coaſt.

THERE were beſides the miracles many circumſtances in this famous tranſmigration of the Iſraelites, which deſerve our notice for their particularity. One of theſe is ſo much to the preſent purpoſe that it muſt be mentioned. The Iſraelites remained forty years in the deſert, before they undertook the conqueſt of the promiſed land, a time ſufficient to wear out the leproſy, if they were afflicted with that diſtemper, as prophane hiſtory aſſerts, the authority of which muſt not be lightly rejected, ſince Jews and Chriſtians both are ſo glad to lean upon it, whenever it ſerves to explain or confirm any point of ſacred chronology or hiſtory, and ſince the impertinence of thinking it ſufficient for that purpoſe, and inſufficient for any other would be too groſs. There is another reaſon given, in the hiſtory aſcribed to MOSES, why the Iſraelites were kept ſo long in the deſert. When they came to the borders of the promiſed land, they mutinied, diſtruſted GOD, who was already declared their GOD, their KING, and the general of their armies. They threatened to chooſe another leader, and to return to Egypt. Upon this provocation it is ſaid, that GOD reſolved to keep them, as he did keep them, wandering in the wilderneſs till the whole generation, of twenty years and upwards, except JOSHUA and CALEB, was dead. Then, and not ſooner, they paſſed the Jordan.

To this reaſon, founded ſolely in the anger of God, may we not preſume to add another, which proceeded from political conſiderations? When, I ſay, political conſiderations, I mean thoſe of Moses, not thoſe of God. Far be it from me to account for the reaſons on which the œconomy of providence proceeds, when theſe reaſons are not plainly revealed to me in the word, or works of God. Far be it from me even to aſſume that infinite wiſdom is directed by conſiderations of human policy. But it is neither licentious, nor prophane, to gueſs at thoſe which the lawgiver of the Jews might have, and I ſhall do it on this occaſion without any ſcruple.

As ſoon as Moses had brought the mixed multitude into the deſert, the decalogue was given, and other laws were publiſhed. He kept them in this ſtation more than a year, and during that time the ſanhedrim was eſtabliſhed, many laws political, judicial, and ceremonial were promulgated, and an entire ſyſtem of religion and civil government was formed. All theſe inſtitutions were enforced, not only by miracles, but by a moſt rigorous puniſhment of offenders; witneſs, among ſeveral, that maſſacre which the Levites made of three thouſand men in one day, when they were commanded, without any other form of proceeding, to take every man his ſword, and to ſlay his neighbour. Seven or eight and thirty years of ſuch government as this, of a theocracy, wherein Moses, who converſed familiarly with God, ſpoke in his name, and delivered and executed his orders, could not fail to make ſtrong impreſſions, and to form ſtrong habits in a new generation of men, who had been bred up under it. To confirm theſe impreſſions and theſe habits, at the end of the fortieth year, juſt before the death of Moses, this legiſlator renewed the covenant, ſo it was called, between God and this people, repeated the

the law, exhorted them by promiſes and threatenings to a ſtrict obſervation of it, and ſent them forward, not to conquer and ſubdue, but to exterminate a whole race, who were devoted by GOD to deſtruction, and whoſe country had been given to his favorite people, the Iſraelites, ſome ages before, even before they were a people.

OTHER nations, thoſe for inſtance who eſtabliſhed new governments in ſeveral provinces of the Roman empire, conquered, and ſubdued, but did not ſeek to exterminate. The Franks proceeded thus in Gaul, the Viſigoths in Spain, the Oſtrogoths and the Lombards in Italy. Driven out of their old habitations by force, or by want, they ſought for new ones in better climates, and countries more fruitful than their deſerts. Their ſpies viſited the lands they deſigned to conquer, and as that "which flowed with milk and honey" tempted the Iſraelites, thoſe that abounded with bread, and fruits, and wine invited them. But when they had defeated all oppoſition by the force and terror of their arms, they ceaſed to be enemies, and the victorious and the vanquiſhed ſoon became one people. They mixed together, and lived under common laws. But this could never be the caſe between the Iſraelites and any other nation. The firſt principle of their policy, eccleſiaſtical and civil, was inſociability, and accordingly their manners were rendered unſuitable to the common nature and genius of mankind, as that great divine Dr. BARROW expreſſes himſelf, in his expoſition of the creed, "They were a choſen people, they were holy, and the reſt "of mankind prophane." GOD dictated their law, he inſtituted, nay he adminiſtred their government, for which purpoſe he reſided amongſt them, and the Levites carried him before them in a wooden trunk, between the cherubim*, as

* —— Arca cherubinis inſtructa, dei vehiculum, et præſentiæ ſuæ pignus. SPEN. de Theo. Jud.

your prieſts pretend to carry him about in a gold or ſilver box. In a word, as abject as this people had been in Egypt, MOSES had taught them to think more highly of themſelves in the deſert, and they came out of it the moſt inſociable nation upon the earth. So inſociable that they could be nothing leſs than tyrants when they conquered, nor any thing better than ſlaves when they were conquered. This has been their caſe too. Their traditions boaſt a few centuries of proſperity and triumph; but in almoſt all ages, before the coming of CHRIST as well as ſince, they have been what TACITUS calls them, "viliſſima pars ſervientium." As they were formed to this character of inſociability and inhoſpitality in the deſert, ſo they came out of it, like beaſts of prey, thirſting after blood. The Huns, begot by devils, who inhabited mount Caucaſus, on Scythian witches*, ſhewed leſs inhumanity, when they were conducted by an hind, whom they followed as a guide ſent them by the gods, into Europe †. ATTILA extended his conqueſts further than JOSHUA; but it may be doubted whether he ſhed more blood. More cool blood he did not moſt certainly. ATTILA gave quarter often, JOSHUA never; and the five kings who hid themſelves in a cave at Makkeda, and who were murdered by the latter, after he had deſtroyed their armies, and made himſelf maſter of their country, would have been ſpared by the former. It was criminal among the Iſraelites in his time, and it was ſo much later, to be content with conqueſt, and with ſpoil, or to ſhew mercy to thoſe they had robbed.

BY ſuch a conduct as we have deſcribed, agreeably to the ſcriptures, this Egyptian colony eſtabliſhed itſelf in Paleſtine, and formed a civil ſociety in the laſt mentioned manner.

* IORN. Hiſt. Got. † Ib.

There

There was not above one city I think with whom they made peace. None escaped the edge of their swords, except such as they could not conquer, and such as found refuge in foreign countries. Some found it among the Phœnicians, for to say that the Phœnicians descended from these refugees, is to affirm what neither has been nor can be proved. Some found it in other countries, in Afric very probably*, since PROCOPIUS speaks of pillars that remained in the Tingitana with this inscription, "we are they who fled from the face of JOSHUA the robber, "the son of NANE." Thus you may see how the prophecy of NOAH was fulfilled, which seems so plain to BOCHART, and other great scholars, and which is so little intelligible in the terms and in the application of them. But whatever becomes of the prophecy, the conquest of CANAAN by this colony from Egypt is the strongest example that can be produced, of the mischiefs brought on mankind in the establishing of civil societies by violence, and therefore much to my present purpose.

XVI.

THO' the establishment of civil societies originally, and the maintenance of them since, have caused, in the order of providence, perpetual wars, and much of that misery which injustice and violence bring on the world, "tot bella per orbem, "tam multæ scelerum facies," yet the necessity of establishing and maintaining them arises from the constitution of human nature, and is therefore indispensable. The great commonwealth of mankind, cannot be reduced under one government, nor subsist without any. Just so we may observe, that the laws and constitutions of particular societies are every

* In Vandalicis.

where various, in a multitude of inſtances oppoſite, and in many abſurd. Laws and conſtitutions are however neceſſary to be made, and, when they are made, to be kept; ſo that we may apply to all theſe caſes a paſſage in TERENCE, much more properly than it is applied by GROTIUS in favor of abſolute power*, "aut hæc cum illis ſunt habenda, aut illa "cum his amittenda ſunt."

BUT now ſince the law of nature tends to promote the peace and happineſs of mankind, and ſince this law is immutably the ſame at all times, and in all places, for which reaſon ARISTOTLE compared it to fire, that warms or burns alike in Perſia and in Greece, how comes it to paſs that the means preſcribed by it, anſwer the ends of it ſo ill? The anſwer is ſhort, but full. Becauſe theſe means are employed by men whoſe imperfection is ſuch, that all they do muſt be, of courſe, imperfectly done. Whether they are compounded of two ſubſtances, or no, may be doubted, but that they have in one ſubſtance or one nature, two principles of determination, cannot be doubted. Affections and paſſions excited by immediate objects of apparent good, are therefore continually in action, and are excited independently of the will, which they determine afterwards. But reaſon is a ſluggard, that cannot be ſo excited. Reaſon muſt be willed into action, and as this can rarely happen when the will is already determined by affections and paſſions, ſo, when it does happen, a ſort of compoſition generally follows, between the two principles; and if affections and paſſions cannot govern abſolutely, nor even ſubject reaſon to ſerve as their inſtrument, they require and obtain more indulgence from her than they deſerve, or than ſhe would ſhew them if ſhe was entirely free from their force, and free from their ſeduction.

* De Jure B. et P. L. i. c. 3. TER. Heaut.

THESE

THESE reflections, which have been touched upon already, may account for the unnatural manner in which the law of nature has been executed by civil ſocieties, and for the abſurd manner in which it has been copied, and improved too, as they pretend, by civil laws. Had the reverſe of all this been done in a cloſer conformity to the law of nature, the moral ſtate of mankind had been truly paradiſaical, but it would not have been human. We ſhould not have been the creatures we were deſigned to be, and a gap would have been left in the gradation of created intelligences. The tables of the law of nature are hung up, as it were, in the works of GOD, and are made obvious to the ſight of man, not becauſe he is able to obſerve them in their whole extent and in every part alike, but that he may keep them conſtantly in view, and depart as little as poſſible, in the midſt of ſo many infirmities and ſo many temptations, from them. GOD has ſhewn us wherein our wiſdom, our happineſs, and the perfection of our nature conſiſt; and he has left us to purſue theſe ends by the uſe of our reaſon. But reaſon not being given to all alike, and being very imperfectly given to thoſe who poſſeſs the greateſt ſhare, our wiſdom and our happineſs are very imperfect likewiſe, and the ſtate of mankind is, upon the whole, a very imperfect ſtate. We look up much higher than we are able to riſe.

WHATEVER violations of theſe laws may have been frequently committed, by particular men, and upon particular occaſions, none that were deemed to be ſuch, and perhaps few that might be called ſuch ſtrictly, have been enacted into laws, or have grown up into eſtabliſhed cuſtoms by the plenary, or leſs plenary permiſſion which civilians ſpeak of, one of which gives a right to do, and the other exempts from puniſhment for doing. I ſcarce believe, on the credit of an-

tient and modern authors, many of the ſtories which are told concerning the manners of people, whom they call ſavage or barbarous. But if I believed them all, I would ſtill maintain that there were in Greece, and at Rome, as many things repugnant to the law of nature enjoined, or at leaſt permitted, as can be produced from the relations we have of the people of Colchos, of the Maſſagetæ, or of the Getulians; and further, that if there are not in our civiliſed and enlightened age as many, there are ſome that exceed, in injuſtice and inhumanity, all that we are told of Iroquois, Braſilians, or the wildeſt inhabitants of African deſerts. The great and principal difference lies here. Our legal violations of natural law have a ſolemn varniſh of policy, and even of religion, which the caſuiſts of the law and thoſe of the goſpel throw over them, and which always diſguiſe, altho' they cannot always hide them. Illiterate ſavage nations have no ſuch varniſh to employ, and their laws and cuſtoms appear to every eye but their own, as unnatural and abominable as they really are. To this it may be added, that they who can write have a great advantage over thoſe who cannot, in all ſuch caſes. They can extenuate and exaggerate matters of fact, and they ſeldom fail to do it, with no more regard to truth than is neceſſary to make the falſehood paſs. If we had the hiſtory of Canaan writ by a Canaanite, that of Carthage by a Carthaginian, or that of Mexico and Peru by a Mexican and Peruvian, figure to yourſelf how the hoſpitality, the fidelity, the innocence, and ſimplicity of manners, of all theſe people, would be exemplified in various inſtances, and what further proofs would be brought of the ferocity, the treachery, the injuſtice and cruelty of the Iſraelites, the Romans, and the Spaniards, of the firſt and the laſt eſpecially.

It has been ſaid, that "the tables of natural law are hung "up in the works of God, and are obvious to the ſight of "man." They are ſo. They are ſo obvious, that no man who is able to read the plaineſt character can miſtake them, and therefore no political ſociety ever framed a ſyſtem of law in direct and avowed contradiction to them. No not even the Jews, who might think, and who did think, that they had little concern in the law of nature; ſince the author of nature had given them a particular law. They might juſtify their neglect of the former, in much the ſame manner that Omar juſtified the order he gave for burning the Alexandrian library; and, by what ſome of their rabbins have ſaid, they ſeem to do little elſe. If the law of nature contains nothing more than the written and oral law of Moses, it is unneceſſary, might they ſay, and the ſaying would be worthy of them. If it contains any thing which is not in the law of Moses, or which differs from that, it ought to be deſtroyed. But however they acknowledged in ſome ſort a law of nature, ſince they acknowledged a law antecedent to that of Moses, and given to all the ſons of Noah.

Upon the whole, the law of nature is too evident, and too important not to have been always the law of laws. Such it has been reputed, and as ſuch it has been reſpected, not only by the moſt famous legiſlators and philoſophers, but by thoſe who made the firſt rude eſſays towards the eſtabliſhment of civil government. Inward conſciouſneſs, and outward obſervation, could not fail to make it known to them, and to the fathers of families, or the patriarchs of mankind before them. The errors about it, and the contradictions to it, that abound, and have always abounded, in the laws and cuſtoms of ſocieties, proceed from cauſes of a very different nature, and

very conſiſtent with all that has been ſaid of it. The law is plain, but the precepts it contains are general. Reaſon collects them eaſily from the whole ſyſtem of God's works, from the conſtitution of human nature, the conſequences of human actions, and the invariable courſe of things. But then to make the greateſt part of theſe general precepts as uſeful to human kind as the divine lawgiver intended them to be, reaſon has a further taſk aſſigned her. Reaſon muſt be employed to make proper and neceſſary deductions from theſe precepts, and to apply them in every caſe that concerns our duty to God and man, according to the different relations in which we all ſtand to both, and the different places we hold in ſociety.

Now human reaſon being at beſt as fallible as it is, and having been as little informed by experience as it was in the early ages, when mankind began to gather into political ſocieties, a multitude of falſe deductions and wrong applications could not fail to be made; for nothing can be more true than this obſervation, that the difficulty of applying general, and even common notions to particulars, is one great cauſe of the errors, and misfortunes of mankind. Theſe deductions and applications were made diverſly among divers people, and every one accepting thoſe of their own growth, for true dictates of nature and reaſon, it is eaſy to conceive what numberleſs prejudices they produced, and how the laws, cuſtoms, opinions, and manners of nations have been rendered as various, and as oppoſite in the very ſame reſpects, as they are and have always been. Theſe prejudices, for ſo they may be properly named, were at firſt univerſally, as they are ſtill in many parts of the world, the prejudices of real ignorance. Thoſe of fantaſtic knowledge ſucceeded theſe, wherever men advanced from ſimplicity to refinement, "a neceſſariis ad ele-"gantiora;" and which of theſe have done moſt hurt may

be diſputed. Thus much is certain. There were prejudices of ſuperſtition to corrupt religion, and prejudices in favor of licentiouſneſs and of tyranny, both to corrupt the firſt principles of civil government, and to perpetuate error: ſo that when men of different families and countries, and all fraught with different prejudices, mingled one way or other in the ſame ſocieties, it is no wonder that their ſyſtems of religion and government were ſuch as we find them in all ages.

THE confuſion was ſo great that the laws of nature, and thoſe of poſitive inſtitution, were but ill diſtinguiſhed, and that ſome, or all, of the firſt kind paſſed for laws of the ſecond, whilſt ſome of the ſecond paſſed for laws of the firſt. Such examples may be found, particularly among the Jews, about whom, of all the antient nations, we are the moſt concerned to be inquiſitive, and of whom it is hard to ſay whether their traditions, or their reaſonings upon them, are moſt precarious. They acknowledged in ſome ſort, as it has been ſaid, a law of nature, ſince they acknowledged a law antecedent to that of MOSES, and unwritten precepts of univerſal and perpetual obligation. The rectitude of theſe precepts is manifeſt, and unknown to no man, "Rectitudo eſt manifeſtior, utpote nemini "ferè non agnita," as Mr. SELDEN ſays *, ſpeaking after the rabbins. But theſe precepts were not collected by human reaſon, from the conſtitution of nature. They were revealed by GOD himſelf to NOAH, the Jews affirm, and were deſigned for all his poſterity, as they were renewed to the Iſraelites, at the ſtation in Mara, with a precept about keeping the ſabbath, and other additional precepts. I enter into theſe particulars in order to obſerve only, what an unnatural jumble this people made of ſeven principal precepts, which compoſed, according

* De jure Nat. et Gent. juxta, &c. L. i. c. x.

to them, a code of natural and univerſal law, and the original ſource of all law, "primordialem legem et matricem omnium "præceptorum Dei*." There is nothing, perhaps, more abſurd nor ridiculous in the whole Jewiſh ſyſtem.

No doubt can be entertained whether the law of nature forbids idolatry, blaſphemy, murder, theft, and, I think, inceſt, too, at leaſt in the ſtricteſt ſenſe of the word, and in the higheſt inſtance of it. But ſurely none, except rabbins, could have blended up with theſe a precept that forbids the eating the member of a living animal, which is ſuch a piece of cruelty, that I ſhall not believe on the word of MAIMONIDES, of ARNOBIUS, or any other author, that the kings of the nations, or the moſt enthuſiaſtic bacchanals, did it in the celebration of their idolatrous feaſts, nor even that the Iſraelites, who were ſo prone to ſpill blood, were as fond of ſwallowing it in this filthy manner, freſh and reeking. This circumſtance alone would be ſufficient to prove, that the "præcepta Noachida-"rum" were an invention of the talmudiſts, whoſe practice it was to forge, and who wanted ſkill and knowledge to make their forgeries probable. A natural law againſt a practice, to which there is no inducement in human nature, altho' men are carnivorous animals, is moſt rabinically, that is, impertinently, aſſumed. He muſt be a rabbin too, who is able to diſcover how a precept, to regulate judicial proceedings, can be ſaid to have made another head of natural law. SELDEN † treats of this in the laſt place, becauſe he thinks it relative to the other ſix, which would have been given in vain, if judgments had not been eſtabliſhed to puniſh the violation of them. But how could all theſe judgments be eſtabliſhed by one of theſe ſeven precepts? By judgments the talmudiſts underſtand all

* Ib. † Lib. vii. c. iv.

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conſtitutions, cuſtoms, actions, circumſtances, deciſions, and law caſes, which are of moment in criminal cauſes. It would be too ridiculous to ſuppoſe judgments, in this ſenſe, eſtabliſhed by a ſingle precept of the law of nature. What did this precept then command? A tribunal to be erected for the trial of all offences againſt theſe laws, or a council-chamber wherein new laws, for enforcing theſe, ſhould be made*? Or did GOD by one precept of natural and univerſal law confirm and ratify all future judgments that ſhould be given, and all future laws that ſhould be made by human authority, to ſecure the obſervation of ſix other precepts? I can think ſo the leſs, becauſe the judgments of his choſen people were often repugnant to the law of nature, truly ſo called in particular inſtances; and becauſe, in general, a ſpirit of injuſtice, which eſtabliſhed one rule for themſelves and another for every other perſon, ran thro' all their judicial proceedings.

ANOTHER inſtance of that confuſion which aroſe in men's notions concerning laws of nature, and laws of poſitive inſtitution, might be drawn from the decree of the firſt chriſtian council, in which the apoſtles and the elders impoſed no other load on the converts from paganiſm, than abſtinence from things offered to idols, from blood, from things ſuffocated, and from fornication, according to the copy we have of it; all of which, as well as circumciſion, and other obſervances from which theſe converts were exempted, made parts of the moſaical inſtitution†. But it appears by antient manuſcripts, and by the citations of IRENÆUS, and CYPRIAN, as well as by other authorities, that another duty which was not moſt certainly of moſaical inſtitution, and was plainly a moral obliga-

* —Domus Judicii nunc pro tribunali aut foro—nunc pro loco aut coëtu, quo ſanciuntur novæ leges—ſumitur. Id. ib.

† SELDEN, Lib. vii. c. 12.

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tion ariſing from the real law of nature, had been contained in the original decree. The converts were to abſtain from doing to others what they would not that others ſhould do to them. This inſtance, and the former, might be more explained. But enough has been ſaid on theſe two ſubjects, and we may proceed to take notice of thoſe inſtances wherein things are, and have been, forbid by civil or eccleſiaſtical laws, which are not only permitted in the fulleſt manner by the law of nature, but ſeem much more conformable to it than the inſtitutions oppoſed to them; and of others wherein things directly forbidden by the law of nature are, and have been, permitted, or commanded, by civil or eccleſiaſtical laws, and by both.

XVII.

THAT the human, like every other ſpecies of animals, ſhould multiply by the copulation of the two ſexes, and be propagated by their care to nurſe and breed up their young, is undoubtedly a law of nature. Self-love, the great ſpring of human actions, prompts to both. But as it is more immediately determined, and more ſtrongly ſtimulated by inſtinct, and by nature, to one than to the other, it became neceſſary to give this principle, by reaſon and by art, all the additional ſtrength that could be given by them, or, at leaſt, to let it loſe none that it had. For this purpoſe it was neceſſary, that parents ſhould know certainly their own reſpective broods, and that, as a woman cannot doubt whether ſhe is the mother of the child ſhe bears, ſo a man ſhould have all the aſſurance law can give him, that he is the father of the child he begets; for a likeneſs of features would not amount to a ſufficient aſſurance, tho' I have read of a country where

women

women were common, and where paternity was aſcertained no other way. Thus matrimony forms families, which could not be formed without it; and families form ſtates, which could not be formed without them. It was this firſt and natural union which preceded, and prepared mankind for political or civil union, and the bonds of this ſecond union were more effectually ſtrengthened by thoſe of paternal and filial affection, and of conſanguinity, than they could have been by thoſe alone of accidental intereſts liable to vary, and of covenants liable to be broken. On ſuch principles, and for ſuch purpoſes I preſume that matrimony was inſtituted. They are evidently derived from the law of nature. The inſtitution therefore is conformable to the law of nature, as far as it is ſubſervient to theſe ends. But when it is carried further than theſe ends require, and that which is conſiſtent with them, or even conducive to them, is forbid, it is, in every ſuch reſpect, a mere arbitrary impoſition.

GREAT attention has been had in every well conſtituted government, to promote the multiplication of mankind, and this attention muſt be always neceſſary; for if the human race is daily increaſing, it is daily decreaſing likewiſe, and it would be trifling to maintain that celibacy is leſs hurtful, or polygamy leſs neceſſary than they were formerly, on CUMBERLAND's vain aſſumption that the earth is ſufficiently peopled. Men who were advanced in years, and had never been married, were ſtigmatiſed at Sparta; and as well there as at Rome, and in many other places, great immunities, prerogatives, and other encouragements were granted to thoſe, who had a large legitimate iſſue. The talmudiſts carry the obligation of getting children ſo far, that they declare the neglect of it to be a ſort

a ſort of homicide. "Quincunque Iſraelita liberis operam "non dat, eſt velut homicida."*

Two ſorts of polygamy are diſtinguiſhed by the civilians. That of one man who has ſeveral wives, and that of one woman who has ſeveral huſbands. All the ends of matrimony are anſwered by the firſt. It has therefore prevailed always, and it ſtill prevails generally, if not univerſally, either as a reaſonable indulgence to mankind, or as a proper, and, in the early ages, a neceſſary expedient to increaſe their numbers. Such it is, no doubt, ſuch it muſt be, in the order of nature; and when we are told that it has not this effect among the people who retain the cuſtom at this day, either the fact aſſerted by men who cannot be competent judges of it, may be untrue, or ſodomy and abortions, in conjunction with other unnatural cauſes, may prevent the natural effect of polygamy. The ends of matrimony are not anſwered by the ſecond, which has been, I ſuppoſe, a double polygamy, wherever it has been practiſed; ſince we cannot believe that the ſuperior ſex ever ſubmitted their prerogative to the inferior, and that ſeveral men became the property of one woman, altho' mention be made by STRABO of the Sabeans, among whom one woman was the wife of a whole family. She lay with the eldeſt all night, and drudged on with the reſt all day. Other examples of the ſame kind might be quoted from modern travellers, who ſpeak of ſome countries where every woman is married to ſeven huſbands, and of others where the wife may, and the huſband may not, call in aſſiſtants to the bed, by which cuſtom the prerogative of the antient patriarchs would be reverſed in favor of women, and they would have, if I may ſay ſo, their male concubines. But, to proceed on the more probable hypo-

* SELDEN Uxor Ebraica, Lib. i. c. 9.

theſis: the divine PLATO approved, the Spartan lawgiver inſtituted, a community of wives, and CÆSAR reports, that there were in our Britain certain amicable ſocieties of both ſexes, wherein every woman was the wife of ten or twelve men, and every man the huſband of as many women. The moſt admired philoſophers, the moſt famous legiſlators, and ſeveral of the leaſt civiliſed people, Britons and others, admitted the ſame abſurd abuſe of matrimony, and deſtroyed one end at leaſt of it's inſtitution, by making the aſcertainment of fathers impoſſible, as DIODORUS SICULUS * ſays, "that of mothers too "was made by a nation in India, where the children were "changed as ſoon as born."

THE firſt ſort of polygamy, for the ſecond was too contrary to nature and good policy to ſpread wide, or to laſt long, was allowed by the moſaical law, and was authoriſed by GOD himſelf. There is, indeed, a very looſe reſtraint laid on a king, in the ſeventeenth chapter of Deuteronomy. He is not to multiply wives, leſt his heart ſhould be turned away; neither is he to multiply greatly ſilver and gold. Moderation was preſcribed in both paſſages: but wives and wealth, ſuitable to the kingly ſtate, were implied in both. The number of one, and the quantity of the other, are not determined. They were left, probably, to the judgment of the king himſelf, for whom the law was made: but the rabbins, who made many arbitrary laws of their own, under pretence of interpreting divine laws, as other rabbins have continued to do, thought fit to limit the number of queens, or of queens and concubines both, to eighteen; the ridiculous reaſons for which ſpecific number may be ſeen in SELDEN's treatiſe, called "Uxor Ebraica †". By the ſame authority prieſts were allowed to have but one

* Lib. ii. † Lib. i. c. 8.

wife, and all other perſons but four; the reaſon for which number it is more eaſy to imagine, than to expreſs decently.

The zeal of the Jews to promote the obſervation of the precept to increaſe and multiply, was ſo great, that, beſides the eſtabliſhment and regulation of polygamy, their doctors deſcended into many particulars for the ſame purpoſe, and among the reſt were careful to appoint ſtated periods, beyond which it was not lawful to neglect the performance of conjugal duty in any form of life. The periods were marked even to the artificer, the countryman, and the ſeaman; and the wife had her remedy if the law was not obſerved. The prodigious numbers, of which this nation appears to have conſiſted, from the exode to the deſtruction of their city by Titus Vespasian, and the conſtant reparation of theſe numbers after ſo many maſſacres, captivities, and other deſolations, muſt be aſcribed, as I think, if we believe them to have been real, to that prodigious and conſtant increaſe of people which a well ordered polygamy cauſed.

The writers, who pretend ſometimes that polygamy has not the effect aſcribed to it, employ, at other times, this very increaſe as an argument againſt it. But ſurely the argument, as well as the pretence, is falſe. Increaſe of people muſt be always an advantage, and can never be hurtful to any ſtate, no nor cumberſome to particular families, unleſs the want of order, good policy, and induſtry make it ſo. To talk of a commonwealth ſinking under it's own weight by the increaſe of people, as Puffendorf does in one place*, might have appeared reaſonable to thoſe antient nations of Europe and Aſia, who ſent ſo many colonies abroad for fear of ſtarving

* Lib. vi. c. 1.

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at home, and would, I queſtion not, appear ſo at this time to the nations of Africa, who ſell their children not only to procure themſelves brandy and tobacco, or other wares, but to prevent an overſtock of inhabitants. The truth however is, and it may be eaſily demonſtrated, that numbers of people are ſtrength and wealth to every country, and that the law of nature, which directs the increaſe of them, is in this inſtance what it is in all others, the law of good policy.

THUS therefore the matter ſtands. This ſort of polygamy is quite conformable to the law of nature, and provides the moſt effectual means for the generation and education of children. In the other ſtate, mankind may multiply perhaps as much in the firſt inſtance of begetting, but not in the ſecond of breeding up, for want of an equal aſcertainment of both the parents: and this defect may diſappoint, to a great degree, the intention of nature. Monogamy, on the other hand, or the confinement of one huſband to one wife, whilſt they both live, for I ſhall uſe the word in this ſenſe here, will unite the care of both parents in breeding up ſubjects of the commonwealth, but will not ſerve as effectually, nor in as great numbers, to the begetting them. The prohibition of polygamy of the firſt kind, is, therefore, not only a prohibition of what nature permits in the fulleſt manner, but of what ſhe requires too in ſome manner, and often in a greater degree than ordinary, for the reparation of ſtates exhauſted by wars, by plagues, and other calamities. The inſtitution of the ſecond ſort contradicts her intention in one part, as the inſtitution of monogamy diminiſhes the effect of her law in another part. The prohibition is abſurd, and the impoſition arbitrary.

THE impoſition is very antient: however, if it be as antient in Greece as CECROPS, and if this kind of matrimony was the

moſt perfect, as many aſſert, there would be reaſon to wonder how the moſt perfect kind came to be eſtabliſhed by an uninſpired lawgiver among the nations, whilſt the leaſt perfect kind had been eſtabliſhed by MOSES, the meſſenger, and prophet of GOD, among his choſen people. The Romans took many things from the Greeks, as well as from the Etrurians, at the foundation of their monarchy, altho' PYTHAGORAS was no more the cotemporary of NUMA, than he was the ſcholar of EZECHIEL. But from whomſoever they took the inſtitution of marriage, the matrimonial tables, and the oath which every married man was obliged to take before the cenſors, declared it to be for the procreation of children; and they made laws occaſionally to encourage this procreation.

IF LYCURGUS, on whoſe principles every child was the child of the commonwealth, deemed it expedient for improving the ſeveral broods, that his citizens ſhould croſs them, by lying with the wives of one another; and if the ephori obliged one of their kings to take a ſecond wife, when he would not part with the firſt, who was barren, the Romans needed to have made no great ſcruple of borrowing wives, to increaſe or to mend their race, and CATO is ſaid to have lent his MARCIA to HORTENSIUS. Nay, CÆSAR intended to procure a law, which one of the tribunes had orders to propoſe, and by which every one ſhould be authoriſed to take as many wives as he pleaſed, and ſuch as he pleaſed, "liberorum quærendorum causâ." The paſſage may, indeed, have another ſenſe; and if SUETONIUS, from whom it is taken, writ---"uxores---quas et quot vellet," inſtead of "vellent," it muſt mean that CÆSAR intended the new prerogative for himſelf alone, as the occaſion that introduces the anecdote, and the circumſtance of directing the law to be propoſed when he ſhould be abſent, "cum ipſe abeſſet," may incline

one to ſuſpect. But, on the other hand, nothing can be more probable than this, that CÆSAR conſidered, beſides the conſtant waſte of Roman citizens, which the expoſition of infants, and perhaps the ſeverity of paternal power, but certainly their ordinary ſtate of war occaſioned, the extraordinary loſs of people, which the commonwealth had ſuſtained in his time by proſcriptions, and a long courſe of civil war. It is probable that he conſidered this, and it is therefore much more wonderful his ſucceſſor ſhould not think, after another proſcription, and another civil war, of eſtabliſhing polygamy, to repair theſe accumulated loſſes, than that he, the firſt CÆSAR, ſhould. This was not done, however, nor was polygamy eſtabliſhed among the Romans before they were chriſtians. It was leſs likely to be ſo afterwards, and if VALENTINIAN married two wives, and gave leave to his ſubjects to do the ſame, by a public edict, as the eccleſiaſtical hiſtorian SOCRATES ſays he did, his example was not followed. We may doubt too, whether that of SOCRATES, the philoſopher I mean, was followed on the ſame occaſion at Athens. DIOGENES LAERTIUS * relates, that the Athenians decreed, when their city was depopulated by war and ſickneſs, that every citizen might have, to increaſe the number of children, a ſecond wife, beſides her who was called his town wife, and of which ſort he could have but one †. SOCRATES took the advantage of this decree, which ſet aſide the law of CECROPS, and he deſpiſed, with a great elevation of mind, thoſe who criticiſed his conduct, and threw out reproaches againſt him. This famous miſſionary of natural religion and law declared by this action, that polygamy was againſt neither, and that the law of CECROPS had forbid what they allowed.

* Vit. SOCRAT. † —Uti urbanam quidem unam uxorem cives ducerent, liceret autem et ex alterâ procreare liberos.

XVIII. THE

XVIII.

THE reaſons that determined the lawgivers of Greece, and Rome, and of ſome few other ſtates, to forbid a plurality of wives, which was permitted in almoſt all countries, may have been ſuch as theſe. They ſaw that polygamy would create large families, and large families a greater expence than could be borne by men who were reduced to live in cities, and other fixed habitations, where property was diſtinguiſhed, and where no one could afford to ſpend more than his legal poſſeſſions, his labor, and his induſtry, gave him. Monogamy was a ſort of ſumptuary law, and might be thought the more reaſonable, becauſe, even in thoſe countries where polygamy was eſtabliſhed, men were not permitted to marry more women than they were able to maintain.

ANOTHER reaſon, that ſerved to confirm this inſtitution, was the part aſſigned to the prieſts in it. DIONYSIUS HALICAR.[a] having obſerved how ill women had been uſed to keep their conjugal vow, even in countries where a very ſingular magiſtrate[b], a magiſtrate to preſerve their chaſtity, was appointed, ſpeaks with great encomium of a law that ROMULUS made to attach every Roman wife to her huſband, by an entire participation of all his poſſeſſions and of his religious rites[c]. Theſe ſacred nuptials were celebrated by a ſolemn ſacrifice, and by the eating together of a conſecrated barley cake. The natural effect of this law and this religious ceremony was ſuch, that during five hundred and twenty years there was no inſtance of

a) Lib. ii. 24, 25. b) --- Cui mulierum caſtitas curæ eſſet.
c) ---Omnium et bonorum et ſacrorum---

a divorce at Rome; for ſo I underſtand the hiſtorian, who does not refer, according to my apprehenſion, to any expreſs prohibition of divorces, in the caſe even of theſe marriages, by the law that eſtabliſhed them, as ſome have imagined. Thus monogamy became, by the intervention of the prieſthood, a religious, as well as a civil inſtitution. I might add, not improperly, nor untruly, that this inſtitution has received at leaſt an indirect ſupport from the vices of huſbands and wives, from thoſe very abuſes which it was deſigned by ROMULUS, and by other legiſlators, to reform. By entering into ſingle marriages, men ſatisfied the natural deſire of propagating their ſpecies, and acquired the means of having a legitimate iſſue; whilſt nothing hindered them, nor their wives neither, except the want of opportunity, from indulging their luſt with others, in ſpight of their ſacred bonds, and the legal property they had in one another's perſons. We may believe the more eaſily, that ſuch conſiderations helped to reconcile pagans to the ſeeming conſtraint of ſingle marriages, ſince we can make no doubt that they have the ſame effect on chriſtians, who think theſe marriages inſtituted by God himſelf immediately, as many of the former deemed them to be enjoined by the law of nature; for what authority does in one caſe, cuſtom might very well do in the other: and it is much leſs ſtrange that cuſtom, which we call a ſecond nature, ſhould paſs for the firſt and real nature, than that human authority ſhould paſs for divine.

BUT of all the reaſons, by which we may account for the prevalence of ſingle marriages, in oppoſition to polygamy, divorces conſtituted the principal and the moſt effectual. With them monogamy may be thought a reaſonable inſtitution. Without them it is an abſurd, unnatural, and cruel impoſition. It croſſes the intention of nature doubly, as it ſtands in oppoſition to the moſt effectual means of multiplying the human

man ſpecies, and as it forbids the ſole expedient, by which this evil can be leſſened in any degree, and the intention of nature can be, in many caſes, at all carried on. Altho' the firſt mention of divorces be made by ISAIAH, and JEREMIAH occaſionally, ſeven or eight hundred years after the law was given, they had been always in uſe among the Iſraelites: and as the right was derived, by their doctors, both from the natural and the moſaical law, ſo they were practiſed under no very ſtrict regulations. I ſay nothing of the forms. The legal cauſes had a great latitude: a divorce was ſufficiently authoriſed when a woman did not find favor in the eyes of her huſband, becauſe of ſome turpitude in her perſon or behavior, or even becauſe he found another woman whom he thought handſomer, or whom it was more convenient to him to marry *. Thus the people of GOD had an advantage, in this reſpect, over other people. Plurality of wives might have made divorces leſs neceſſary. The defects in body or mind of one, would be compenſated by the perfections of the others; or if they proved all alike diſagreeable, the huſband had the reſource of concubines. The caſe of the Romans, and all thoſe nations where ſingle marriages were eſtabliſhed, was very different. He who had a barren wife could not fulfil the law of nature, nor ſwear without perjury, as he was obliged to do, that he kept a wife in order to have children by her; and therefore CARVILIUS RUGA † acted very conſcientiouſly when he was the firſt, if he was the firſt, to put away his wife. The law-caſuiſts, who decide that barrenneſs is not a ſufficient cauſe of ſeparation, becauſe it may be the misfortune, but cannot be imputed as the fault of the woman, might as well decide, that no accidental infirmity, which renders a man incapable of per-

* Fœditatem perſonalem, negotium impudicum. Si invenerit aliam pulchriorem, aut ſibi commodiorem. SELD. De Ux. Ebraic. † DION. HAL. ubi ſupra.

forming

forming his office in the ſtate, is a ſufficient reaſon for removing him. The Romans paid no regard to ſuch caſuiſtry. They continued divorces in this, and many other caſes; ſuch, for inſtance, as ill management of family affairs, or an intolerable and incurable ill humor, which were the reaſons, I preſume, of CICERO's divorce from TERENTIA; and good reaſons ſurely, ſince the huſband may be ruined by one, and the peace of his whole life be deſtroyed by the other.

THE inſtitution of divorces was of ſuch abſolute neceſſity where a plurality of wives was forbid, and of ſo much conveniency where this plurality was allowed, that it continued on the ſame foot among the Romans, till chriſtianity was eſtabliſhed fully in the empire, and that it continues ſtill among the Jews in the eaſt, if not practiſed, for prudential reaſons, in the ſame manner, and as openly, in the weſt.

SELDEN gives a very particular account, in the third book of his "Hebrew wife," of the occaſion on which divorces were reſtrained, and it amounts to this. HILLEL and SAMMÆAS were of that ſet of men, the rabbins, who pretended to have authentic traditions, and certain interpretations of their law conveyed down to them from MOSES; and who were, notwithſtanding this oral rule of faith, of doctrine, and of manners, frequently in oppoſition, and at the head of different factions in the ſchools of the Jews. Two ſuch factions had been formed, concerning the legal grounds of divorces, by HILLEL, and SAMMÆAS who had been his ſcholar, as GAMALIEL, the maſter of ſaint PAUL, is ſaid to have been his nephew and his ſucceſſor; and the diſputes ran high between them whilſt CHRIST was on earth. The Hillelians maintained the original right of repudiation, and ſuch as it was practiſed, not only in the caſe of adultery, or turpitude, but in every

other caſe, " ob omnimodam rem ſeu cauſam [a]." The Sammæans inſiſted on a reformation of this cuſtom, and on a new interpretation of the law founded on a grammatical criticiſm. They confined the right of divorce to the caſe of turpitude, alone. CHRIST decided the queſtion in favor of the latter, and ſpecified but one kind of turpitude. This deciſion appeared ſo ſtrange to his diſciples, that they were at a loſs, as well as the phariſees, to gueſs why then MOSES had eſtabliſhed the right of divorce; for it is probable the notion had not prevailed amongſt them, that GOD tolerated ſuperſtitious practices, or permitted even crimes to have the ſanction of his law, as in the preſent caſe it is ſaid that he did, becauſe of the hardneſs of heart of their fathers. The diſciples therefore cried out, that, if this was the caſe, it would be better not to marry. The Jews did not ſubmit to this deciſion. The ſame diſpute continued many years; and about ſeventy from the birth of CHRIST it was decided in favor of HILLEL by that oracle from heaven, " the daughter of the voice [b]," which was heard at Jabne, not far from Jeruſalem, and the place perhaps where the ſanhedrim was then held. But the law of grace was ſuperior, in time, to the natural, and the moſaical law, among chriſtians. It had a right to be ſo; and, beſides, we may believe very probably, and very piouſly, with JUSTIN the martyr, that JOSEPH, having ſuſpected the holy virgin to have been got with child before her marriage, had entertained thoughts of ſeparating from a wife whom he could not keep according to the laws of his country [c]. We may believe too, on the foundation of this anecdote, that chriſtians were prepared to underſtand the words of JESUS in a ſenſe the moſt reſtrictive of divorces, and the leaſt favorable to that inſtitution. I ſaid, that the law of grace was ſuperior in time to the other;

a) lb. l. iii. c. 20. b) Filia vocis. c) ---Juxta patrios mores ejiciendam.

for as little as we know what the practice of christians was during the first three hundred years, we know in general, that great relicts of judaism remained long amongst them; that divorces were in use, even those which wives signified to their husbands; that the meaning of the word fornication was extended from the flesh to the spirit; and that this institution was observed, admitted, denied, to the time of CONSTANTINE, without any certain rule at all; "aliter atque aliter †," says SELDEN. From that time downwards, emperors published edicts; councils made decrees; fathers, and after them schoolmen, advanced opinions; ecclesiastical and principally papal power increased; a new jurisprudence, the child of usurpation, of ignorance, and bigotry, grew up under the care of the canonists; marriage was declared a sacrament, and this tie indissoluble.

XIX.

BEFORE we leave the subject of positive laws, ecclesiastical and civil, that forbid those things arbitrarily, and by mere will, which the laws of nature permit; we may properly enough take notice of some restrictions relatively to marriages, which have not been so hard to impose as the obligation of single marriages. Polygamy had been allowed in most nations, divorces I believe in all. It required time, therefore, to abolish institutions, both of which had revelation and reason on their side, and the last of which had been confirmed by universal practice. But it required neither time nor pains to continue the prohibition of marriages within certain degrees of consanguinity and affinity. The Jews, among whom christia-

† Ib. c. 28.

nity aroſe, held ſuch inceſtuous marriages to be forbidden as much as adultery, ſodomy, and beſtiality. The Greeks, and the Romans, among whom chriſtianity had the greateſt increaſe, and the firmeſt eſtabliſhment, ſeem to have held different opinions, at different periods, about the remoter degrees, but not to have varied about thoſe in the aſcending or deſcending lines; and the Romans, who made one ſtate, were more uniform on this head than the Greeks, who were divided into many, and whoſe country produced many a whimſical philoſopher that affected law-giving, beſides PLATO. The nations among whom no regard was paid to theſe degrees, but brothers mixed with ſiſters, fathers with their daughters, and ſons with their mothers, were held in abomination, like all other nations, by the Jews, who were in return held in contempt by theſe and all others. Theſe, and all others, were deemed barbarous by the Greeks and the Romans; ſo that their example might well have, as it had, no effect, in this reſpect, either on the Jews, the Greeks, or the Romans; tho' two of them, at leaſt, the egyptian and babylonian, had been maſters of the former in every ſenſe, and tho' the ſecond and the third had received the firſt principles of all their knowledge, and perhaps the firſt uſe of letters, from the ſame, either immediately like the Greeks, or mediately thro' the Greeks, like the Romans.

THAT the abhorrence of inceſtuous marriages ſhould prevail among the Jews, is eaſily accounted for, ſince they founded it on a poſitive law of God. But how it came to prevail among the Greeks and the Romans, is not ſo clear. Was it founded among them on a law, and is it even an inſtinct of nature? This has been ſaid, but cannot be maintained. They ſcarce deſerve an anſwer, who would prove theſe marriages prohibited by the law of nature, on the ſuppoſition that there

is a repugnancy in nature to any ſuch copulations; as if conſanguinity, like fire, produced an agreeable ſenſation at certain diſtances, and pain and abhorrence at a nearer approach; as if a multitude of nations, civiliſed and unciviliſed, could have been determined to act unneceſſarily againſt ſo ſtrong an inſtinct of nature, as this repugnancy or abhorrence is aſſumed to be; and finally, as if the firſt men, who could not increaſe and multiply without committing inceſt, had been commanded to do it by the author of nature, againſt the law of that nature he had juſt before given them.

A GREAT deal of dull pains has been taken to inquire into the nature of ſhame, and to diſcover the motives of that modeſty with which almoſt all mankind, even the moſt ſavage, conceal the parts, and remove out of ſight to perform the act of generation. How comes this about, ſay ſuch writers, "when the propagation of ſo noble a creature as man "is in itſelf a work of honor and credit*?" The queſtion might be ſufficiently anſwered by ſaying, that the parts, deſtined to this pleaſant, and honorable uſe, are deſtined likewiſe to uſes that are offenſive to our ſenſes; and that they ſhew, by the neceſſity they are of to our being in one deſtination, and to the propagation of our ſpecies in another, a certain mortifying identity of nature with the vileſt of the animal kind. Theſe parts are placed, as it were, out of the way in the human fabric; and, in conformity to this indication, the cuſtom of hiding them, and of retiring from the ſight of others when we employ them to any purpoſe, has grown up in both ſexes, and been confirmed by education. "Hanc naturæ tam diligentem fabricam imitata eſt hominum "verecundia†." Shame or modeſty, according to TULLY,

* PUF. l. vi. c. 1. † CIC. Offic. l. i.

makes

makes us imitate nature in this inſtance: but I think that the latent principle of this ſhame, or modeſty, is a vanity inherent in our nature, derived from an opinion of excellence and dignity. It is this that makes us fond of ſhewing, wherever we can ſhew it, how ſuperior we are to other animals, and to hide, wherever we can hide it, how much we participate of the ſame nature.

Other reflections might be added to theſe, ſuch particularly as furniſh reaſons for the ſolitude wherein the two ſexes affect to copulate; among which perhaps an uncontrouled and undiſturbed indulgence to their mutual luſt would not be found the leaſt. But to what purpoſe ſhould this be done, when there is nothing in the aſſumed ſhame, even if we allow it to be natural, that has any more relation to inceſtuous than to other marriages? The ſhame of expoſing their ſecret parts, and of copulating in public, was, to be ſure, juſt as ſtrong in thoſe who contracted the firſt, as in thoſe who contracted the ſecond; and it is impoſſible to conceive that it can cauſe any natural abhorrence of one of theſe conjunctions more than of the other, or indeed of either. It remains therefore that this abhorrence is artificial, and that it has been inſpired by human laws, by prejudice, and by habit.

But tho' this be evidently true, yet is it true likewiſe, that the degrees ſpoken of are to be diſtinguiſhed; for tho' the prohibition cannot be deduced, in any of them, from inſtinct, or animal nature; yet it is favored by reaſonable nature in ſome. The permiſſion, that her laws give to conjunctions neceſſary to the propagation of the ſpecies of animals, may be conceived to be in the human leſs, and more full, or abſolute, according to the received diſtinction of legal permiſſions that I have ſomewhere mentioned. The conjunctions of fathers with

with their daughters, and of ſons with their mothers, if they are thought permitted, muſt be thought to be ſo by the loweſt ſort of natural permiſſion, not only for the reaſon SOCRATES gives in XENOPHON, the diſparity of age, from which he ſuppoſed, not weakly, as it has been objected, but wiſely, and providently, that ſeveral inconveniencies would ariſe; but for a reaſon of more importance, and of univerſal extent. The firſt ſocieties, and thoſe which compoſe all others, are family ſocieties. Theſe are natural, and the better they are regulated the more eaſily and the more ſurely will political ſocieties, whoſe component parts they are, be put and maintained under good regulations. Parents are the chief magiſtrates of families, and every thing that tends to diminiſh a reverence for them, or to convert it into ſome other ſentiment, diminiſhes their authority, diſſolves the order of thoſe little commonwealths, and introduces a licentiouſneſs of manners, which they carry with them and diffuſe in the greater. This now muſt happen in ſome degree wherever the cuſtom prevails, that fathers take their daughters, and ſons their mothers for wives or miſtreſſes, whenever they do it actually, or may do it lawfully. I need not ſtay to prove and to illuſtrate this; but may conclude on what has been ſaid, that if natural law does not directly prohibit ſuch conjunctions as theſe, it does not permit them neither in ſo full a manner, as to give them that ſanction which other marriages, that are reputed to be contrary to the law of nature, and that are called alike inceſtuous, have.

THE marriages of brothers and ſiſters, for inſtance, which ſtand in the very next degree, may be objected to, as they may be defended, by probable arguments drawn from political conſiderations; but no color of an argument can be drawn againſt them from the conſtitution of nature, in which all

all her laws are contained, and by which they are all promulgated. It may be ſaid, and I find that ſomething of this kind has been ſaid, that the intention of reaſonable nature being not only to ſtrengthen the bonds of ſociety as much, but to improve ſociability among men, and to extend it as wide as poſſible, in oppoſition to that inſociability which is ſo apt to grow up between diſtinct families and ſtates, thoſe poſitive laws, which forbid marriages in near degrees of conſanguinity and affinity, are conformable to nature, and drawn by neceſſary conſequences from her laws. For this reaſon it may be ſaid, that ſuch marriages were forbidden among ſeveral of the moſt civiliſed nations in the pagan world, and that we find ſo many prohibitions in caſes of affinity, as well as of conſanguinity, in the eighteenth chapter of Leviticus. The more remote degrees were prohibited perhaps to fence in, and to ſecure the better an obſervation of the neareſt; and this might be the more neceſſary becauſe of the precedent practice of mankind, who had been conſtituted by God, at the creation, in a neceſſity of committing what was now forbidden, ſince they could not otherwiſe have obeyed his firſt and great precept, to increaſe and multiply. Eve was in ſome ſort the daughter of Adam. She was literally bone of his bone, and fleſh of his fleſh, by birth, if I may call it ſo, whereas other huſbands and wives are ſo in an allegorical manner only. But to paſs this over, the children of the firſt couple were certainly brothers and ſiſters, and by theſe conjunctions, declared afterwards inceſtuous, the human ſpecies was firſt propagated. If you accept rabinical authority, you may believe that Eve brought forth conſtantly twins, a male and a female, as pigeons, I think, are ſaid to do; ſo that Cain might marry the twin ſiſter of Abel, and Abel the twin ſiſter of Cain. Whether this inſtitution alters, and ſoftens the caſe any more than that of the Lacedæmonians, who were permitted to marry their

their ſiſters on the mother's ſide, but not on the father's; or than that of the Athenians, who might by law, or who did by cuſtom, marry their ſiſters on the father's ſide, but not on the mother's, as we find by the example of ABRAHAM and SARAH, it was reputed lawful to do in the days of the patriarchs, let the great caſuiſts of law and goſpel decide. It may be ſaid, on the other hand, that, if it be agreeable to the law of nature and of right reaſon, in many caſes, to extend the bonds of ſociety by a prohibition of marriages between perſons too near a-kin, it is in many caſes at leaſt as agreeable to this law, to preſerve poſſeſſions and wealth in the families to which they belong, and not to ſuffer them to be carried by any female caprice into others. Precautions to this effect have been taken by wiſe legiſlators; and that which MOSES took is remarkable in all it's circumſtances. He had made a law, on the application of the daughters of ZELOPHEHAD, "whoſe cauſe" he is ſaid to have "brought before "the Lord *," by which if a man died and had no ſon, his inheritance was to "paſs unto his daughter †." But when the chief fathers of the families of the ſons of JOSEPH came before MOSES and the elders of Iſrael, to complain of this law, the precaution we ſpeak of here was immediately added, and the law amended. MOSES declared in the name of GOD, that "every daughter, who poſſeſſed an inheritance" by virtue of the former law, ſhould be obliged to marry one of the family of the tribe of her father, and no other: and the reaſon is annexed, "that the children of Iſrael may enjoy every man "the inheritance of his fathers." In obedience to this law, the daughters of ZELOPHEHAD "were married unto their father's brother's ſons.

IT is evident on the whole, that marriages, within certain degrees of conſanguinity and affinity, are forbid by political

* Num. c. 27. † Ibid. c. 36.

inſtitutions, and for political reaſons; but are left indifferent by the law of nature, which determines nothing expreſly about them. The laws of nature are general; and in this caſe, as in all others, the particular application of them, and the means of ſecuring their effect, are left to human prudence. "Increaſe and multiply" is the law of nature. The manner in which this precept ſhall be executed with greateſt advantage to ſociety, is the law of man. When the latter promotes the execution of the former, without breaking any other general law of nature, it is conformable to this law. This may be done, and has been done, by different inſtitutions of marriage. Which of theſe is the moſt effectual relatively to the precept of increaſing and multiplying, and at the ſame time conſiſtent with the whole tenor of natural law, reaſon and experience muſt decide. In the mean time, we may venture to aſſert, that the moſt effectual to this purpoſe, under this condition, which ever it be, is the moſt conformable to nature, tho' it be not a law of nature. To marry among our kindred, or to marry ſtrangers, is equally effectual to the propagation of the ſpecies, altho' polygamy and monogamy may not be ſo: and therefore ſince there are political reaſons for and againſt the marriages referred to, the prohibition of either is merely arbitrary. It may be expedient on ſome occaſions; but however the prohibition turns, it is a law of will that forbids what the law of nature permits. As occaſions are various, circumſtances different, and will above all uncertain, ſo have theſe reſtraints on marriage been very inconſiſtently laid. In ſome places or times, it was unlawful to marry a ſiſter by the father's, and in others by the mother's ſide; or it was lawful to marry a couſin-german, and not an aunt, as among the Jews by their moſaical law. But the moſt ridiculous of all theſe inconſiſtencies, is to be found in that great repertory of inconſiſtencies and abſurdities, the ra-

binical ſyſtem of religion and law. When a gentile became a "proſelyte of juſtice*," he became, according to this ſyſtem, a new man, and loſt all his former relations by this regeneration. He could not be affected, therefore, by the law that forbid the marriage of a mother, a daughter, or a ſiſter, for he had none; and yet the prohibition was extended to him by the blundering caſuiſtry of the rabbins, as it may ſeem, even when theſe relations were doubly diſſolved, and the mother, the daughter, or the ſiſter was a proſelyte of juſtice, as well as himſelf.

XX.

AFTER ſaying thus much of eccleſiaſtical and civil laws, that forbid what the laws of nature permit, ſomething muſt be ſaid of thoſe which permit, or enjoin, what the laws of nature forbid, ſuch things as are in direct oppoſition not only to reaſonable nature, but to phyſical inſtinct. Sodomy was permitted among ſeveral nations, and if we dare not ſay that the moral SOCRATES practiſed it, we may ſay that the divine PLATO recommended it, in ſome of his juvenile verſes at leaſt: and yet ſodomy is very inconſiſtent with the intention of nature, which can be carried on by the conjunction of the two ſexes only. Of beſtiality I ſay nothing, becauſe I do not remember any proof that it was uſed by any people except the Iſraelites, who muſt have been very prone to this unnatural crime, ſince ſo great ſeverity of law was neceſſary to reſtrain them from it. Caſtration and celibacy may be cited on this occaſion. They are both contradictions to the law of nature; the firſt wantonly permitted, the ſecond deceitfully and ambitiouſly commanded. The firſt makes obedience to the law impracticable, for two the moſt

* SELD. de Jure, &c. l. 5.

ſilly purpoſes imaginable, to provide guards for the ſeraglios of the eaſt, and ſingers for the theatres of the weſt. The ſecond came into faſhion early in the chriſtian church, to ſpeak of no other, under the pretence of greater purity, and was pleaded for, and practiſed by orthodox enthuſiaſts, as well as by heretics. But when the church, with the biſhop of Rome at the head of it, made a bold, and ſucceſsful puſh to be every where ſuperior to the ſtate, the celibacy of prieſts became a coercive law. GREGORY the ſeventh made the whole clergy ſubmit to it, and the council of Trent maintained it ſtrenuouſly for the ſame reaſon of eccleſiaſtical ambition, that the religious ſociety might be every where more independent on the civil, and leſs attached, by the ties of nature as well as of law, to the ſtate.

THERE are other examples of the ſame kind, which cannot be brought without the utmoſt horror; becauſe in them it is ſuppoſed impiouſly, againſt principles as ſelf-evident as any of thoſe neceſſary truths which are ſuch of all knowledge, that the Supreme Being commands by one law what he forbids by another. The zealots among the Jews aſſumed a right to aſſaſſinate any Jew, or any other man, who ſhould ſeem to them to violate by public and ſtrong appearances . . . . "Speciebus "aliquot facti atrocioribus[a]," the ſanctity of the Divinity, of the temple, or of the nation[b]. Thus MATTATHIAS[c], in the fury of his holy zeal, ruſhed on the Jew who was about to ſacrifice in obedience to the edict of ANTIOCHUS[d], and on the officer appointed to take care of the execution of the edict, and murdered them both. In this caſe the appearances were not equivocal, moſt certainly. In many they might be ſo, and

a) SELD. de Jure &c. l. iv. c. 4. b) Sanctitatem ſive numinis, ſive templi, ſive gentis. c) Ibid. d) Maccab. JOSEPH.

were

were ſo moſt probably very often, as in that for inſtance of a prieſt who was ſuppoſed to perform his office without a due purification *, and who might be dragged out of the temple on this preſumption by the young prieſts; too young to be employed in any other ſacerdotal function, but to whom it was lawful to daſh out his brains with their clubs. In all caſes it was againſt the very eſſence, as well as forms of juſtice, to truſt in any hands a power which none but enthuſiaſts would exerciſe. This ſtrange power, however, was founded on their traditional or oral law; and the example of PHINEAS, who murdered ZIMRI and COZBI in the act of fornication †, and the approbation which God is ſaid to have given to this action, were brought to authoriſe the zealots in a practice which produced ſuch ſcenes of horror among the Jews, even whilſt they were beſieged by a common enemy, as no other nation ever exhibited: ſuch ſcenes as lions and tigers, provoked by hunger, and let looſe together, would hardly have afforded.

IF we take for granted all that we find related, and as it ſtands related, in the books of the old Teſtament: we muſt believe that the all-perfect Being approved, and commanded on many particular occaſions, the moſt abominable violations of the general laws of nature, which were his own at leaſt, as certainly as any of thoſe that could be given by immediate revelation, and more certainly than any of thoſe which were aſſumed on the authority of MOSES, or on any authority afterwards to be ſo given. Now this we cannot believe as theiſts; nor are we, I think, under any obligation of believing it as Jews, and much leſs as Chriſtians. As theiſts we cannot believe the all-perfect Being liable to one of the greateſt of hu-

* .... in immunditie ſuâ † Num. c. 25.

man

man imperfections, liable to contradict himself. Nothing is more conformable to our idea of such a being, than to believe that human reason cannot account for the proceedings of infinite wisdom in a multitude of instances, in many of those perhaps which seem the most obvious to it. But nothing is, at the same time, more inconsistent with this idea than to believe that this Being perplexes his laws with apparent contradictions, or deviates from them like human legislators in the particular applications of them; and that God, who never acts against the perfections of his own nature, commands his creatures to act upon any occasion against the perfection of theirs. If we try the whole system of the religion and policy of the Jews, by this rule, I apprehend that all the sophism which has been, or can be employed, with the help of begging the question throughout, will not be sufficient to acquit this system in many cases at the tribunal of informed and unprejudiced reason. The theist, as a theist, can never admit that laws, which are inconsistent with that reason, and process of reasoning by which he discovers, and can alone discover the existence and the will, relatively to man, of an all-perfect Being, were given at any time or to any people by this Being. He will never give up one for the sake of the other, nor renounce demonstration in the highest degree for probability in the highest, and much less in the lowest. All such laws, therefore, as are manifest violations of the laws of his nature, will be ascribed by him to man, not to God.

A LARGE field of particulars opens itself. Let us confine ourselves to that on which we have touched already. One law of nature forbids murder, as well as one law of the decalogue. Another allows it as far as it is necessary to self-defence, and to the preservation of society, that is, to the maintainance of the whole system of natural law. It will not be pre-

pretended, I ſuppoſe, that theſe two laws contradict one another. They coincide in the ſame plan. The general and the particular law tend to the ſame purpoſe; they ſhew the wiſdom of the legiſlator by their conſiſtency, and his goodneſs by their univerſality. It cannot be pretended with any appearance of truth, I am ſure, that the ſame may be ſaid of the moſaical laws about murder. The whole ſyſtem of the law of MOSES, like the whole ſyſtem of his conduct, was founded on murder, and the exceptions which he made, by particular laws in favor of it, to the general law againſt it, were ſo numerous, as to make this in great meaſure vain; which may be thought, without abſurdity, not to be one mark of his divine legation. The thirteenth chapter of Deuteronomy might find it's place here; and many ſingular reflections might be made, concerning the precautions taken againſt falſe prophets, whoſe ſeductions could be of little force in oppoſition to a true prophet; and againſt dreamers of dreams, that could have little force in oppoſition to daily and almoſt hourly miracles, wrought in the ſight of all Iſrael. Others might be made on certain precepts, from which I will ſuppoſe, candidly, that the inquiſition eſtabliſhed in your church has copied the inſtructions ſhe gives to her familiars; and others again on a ſpirit of cruelty, that involves the innocent with the guilty, ſpares neither man, woman, nor beaſt, neither the brother, the ſon, the daughter, the wife, nor the friend, but makes of the whole chapter ſuch an edict as could not be imputed to ATTILA, without doing injuſtice to the uncircumciſed as well as unchriſtian king of the Huns. Such obſervations, I ſay, might be made, and be puſhed to conviction; to inward conviction I mean, for there are thoſe that will not own it when they feel it, but have recourſe rather to trifling diſtinctions and dogmatical affirmation, the laſt entrenchments of obſtinacy. In theſe let us leave them. Let it avail as much

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as it can avail, to ſay that the laws referred to, and written in blood, like thoſe of DRACO, were given to the Iſraelites alone; that the Iſraelites were GOD's people excluſively of all others; that he was their king by a particular covenant, as well as their GOD; that idolatry was in every Iſraelite a breach of this covenant, an act of high treaſon, a political crime, and fit to be puniſhed as ſuch; in a word, that on all theſe accounts GOD might give them ſuch laws in the former relation, as he could not have given to them, nor to any other people, in the latter alone without contradicting, and obliging thoſe who obeyed them to contradict, the general law of nature, whereof he was the author, and by which the puniſhment of individuals "in "terrorem" according to their ſeveral degrees of guilt, not the undiſtinguiſhing extermination of collective bodies, and eſpecially for matters of opinion, is allowed. I have met with arguments of this ſort employed to juſtify the moſaical law. They will not be admitted by ſome, perhaps, becauſe MOSES made uſe of the ſame cruel, and undiſcerning jurisprudence, on account of their idolatry, againſt the Canaanites, who had no ſuch covenant with God, nor were the ſubjects of ſuch theocracy; who were obnoxious to divine vengeance in no other reſpect than that which was common to them and all the heathen nations; and who had provoked the Iſraelites by no other injury than that of ſelf-defence; that theſe laws were therefore in the mouth of MOSES, and in the underſtanding of all the people, the laws of GOD as GOD, and not merely as king. But whatever be determined, the example is to my purpoſe. He who can perſuade himſelf that GOD, as king of a particular people, whom, as GOD, he had ſeparated from the reſt of mankind, gave theſe laws to the Iſraelites, muſt ſtill confeſs, that theſe laws are repugnant to thoſe of nature, which will leave the difficulty much where he found it. He, who inſtead of reſting on this diſtinction, confounds the king

and the GOD together, as MOSES and the Iſraelites certainly did, is reduced to the neceſſity of owning what no ſincere and conſiſtent theiſt can own, that the Supreme Being contradicted his own laws in this inſtance. A ſincere and conſiſtent theiſt, then, muſt look on the thirteenth chapter of Deuteronomy, as an example of human laws that command what the laws of nature forbid.

THAT neither the Jew, nor the Chriſtian, is under any obligation to look on it otherwiſe, may be collected from hence. The ſaducees rejected the whole oral law, and all the traditions of the phariſees; they rejected too, moſt probably, the whole written law, except the five books aſcribed to MOSES, tho' this has been controverted; they denied the immortality of the ſoul, the reſurrection of the dead, and a ſtate of future rewards and puniſhments, which they eſteemed to be doctrines invented or adopted by the phariſees, and which we may believe, on very good grounds, to have been introduced into the jewiſh church at different times, as well as from different churches, wherein we know that they were taught, ſince there are no evident traces of theſe, but rather of the contrary opinions, in the moſaical ſyſtem of religion. The ſaducees, therefore, oppoſed on all theſe points, not only the phariſees firſt, but the doctrine of CHRIST, to whom few of them were converted afterwards. The ſaducees, however, continued members of the jewiſh church, and ſacrificed at Jeruſalem, whilſt the ſamaritans were driven out, or drove themſelves out, and ſacrificed on the mountain of Gerizaim: neither do we find, that the former were ſo obnoxious to the cenſure of CHRIST, as the phariſees. But the phariſees were ſtill the orthodox, that is, the ſect in faſhion; and how much they multiplied the obſervances of the law by their traditions, and varied the ſenſe of it by their interpretations of it, is enough known in

general by every one. Now it ſeems very plain, that a Jew, whether ſaducee or phariſee, might have ſoftened by different methods, agreeably to the principles of his ſect, the abominable violations of the natural, by the moſaical law. This too, one may believe, would have been done, if the cruel ſpirit of their law had not made them a nation of enthuſiaſts; and if long habits had not made the ſpilling of blood more familiar to them than to moſt other people. The ſaducees were famous for their ſtrict attachment to the rules of juſtice; and ſome are of opinion, that they took their name from an hebrew word, ſignifying juſtice, rather than from SADOC the diſciple of ANTIGONUS SOCHÆUS. Surely then a Jew, in the character of a ſaducee, might reject out of the pentateuch, with a due regard to natural juſtice, thoſe unnatural, unjuſt, and bloody inſtitutions, as reaſonably, and as reconcileably with his judaiſm, as he rejected the whole oral law in oppoſition to the phariſees, and all the other books of their ſcriptures, in conformity to the ſamaritans. A Jew, in the character of a phariſee, might have reconciled, with ſtill greater eaſe, the law of MOSES to the law of nature, that is, the aſſumed law of GOD to the real. A third law, the oral, might have brought this about, and this would have been the very beſt uſe to which it was ever put. When I ſay this might have been done with ſtill greater eaſe, by interpretation than by retrenchment, I do not ſpeak without ſufficient grounds; ſince I may undertake to ſhew, from SELDEN, BASNAGE, and other authors, who deal in the talmud, and in talmudical writings of rabbins, which they render intelligible even to me, that it would coſt leſs improbability of tradition, and leſs ſubtilty of ſophiſm in commenting, than many other opinions did, which theſe men had the credit to eſtabliſh. The latitude of interpretation according to various ſenſes, and the authority of a cabbala, were certain expedients by which the

imputation might have been taken from the Supreme Being, or the ſeverity and injuſtice have been ſoftened and excuſed in MOSES. Nothing of this kind having been done, I conclude once more, that this chapter of Deuteronomy ſtands, and muſt ſtand, an example of human laws, that command what the laws of nature forbid.

LITTLE more conſideration will be neceſſary to diſcover that a chriſtian, who profeſſes a religion promulgated by GOD himſelf, and in every point conformable to the law of nature, is obliged to deny any precept which is repugnant to this law to come from GOD, let it come on what authority, or be aſſumed on what pretence ſoever. The proceedings of providence are repreſented, on one occaſion particularly, by St. PAUL, to be merely arbitrary, and the preſumption of thoſe who ſhould inquire into the reaſon of them, is very prudently reproved before hand. How juſt the repreſentation, or the reproof is, may be queſtioned, as the firſt of them has been, and as they both may be the more reaſonably, becauſe theſe proceedings relate to GOD's dealings with men; for the juſtice of which we are told by divines, that he appeals even to men. But this apoſtle himſelf does not, I think, preſcribe any thing directly oppoſite to the law of nature, as the command of GOD to man; tho' his writings abound with myſterious refinements that favor ſtrongly of the phariſaical ſchool, and with the mirabilia and inopinata of the portic, a ſchool not unknown to the former.

IN all caſes, and however this may be, the goſpel of CHRIST is one continued leſſon of the ſtricteſt morality, of juſtice, of benevolence, and of univerſal charity. He could have called for fire down from heaven, or for an army of deſtroying angels, to terrify thoſe who did not believe, or to

exterminate ſuch as fell from the faith. But he breathed quite another ſpirit; and his inſtructions to his apoſtles went no further than to preach, to exhort, to reprove; and, where they could not prevail to have their doctrine received, to ſhake off the duſt of their feet. In caſes of the moſt enormous crimes, and even of apoſtacy, the apoſtles exerciſed no other power than that of ſeparating ſuch ſinners from the communion of the faithful. If it ſhould be urged that they could exerciſe no other, becauſe they were not chief magiſtrates, nor legiſlators in any civil ſociety as MOSES was, and therefore that no argument ought to be drawn from what they did not do, to condemn what MOSES did and commanded, it would be urged in vain. They healed the lame, they cured the blind, and even raiſed the dead to prove their miſſion. MOSES proved his miſſion by miracles likewiſe. But the miracles wrought by them in the mild and beneficent ſpirit of chriſtianity, tended to the good of mankind; whereas the miracles he wrought, in the fierce and cruel ſpirit of judaiſm, tended to the deſtruction of mankind. In this caſe, therefore, the difference was great; but in the other, in that of keeping the Jews attached to their religion, and the Chriſtians to theirs, the difference was total. MOSES exerciſed, and commanded the exerciſe of a political power, the moſt tyrannical, the moſt contrary to the laws of nature, and the moſt irreconcilable to every ſentiment of humanity, for this purpoſe. The apoſtles, who might have exerciſed, for the ſame purpoſe, a divine, and a much greater power, exerciſed no other than that which has been mentioned, which was not cruel, moſt certainly, and can be ſcarce called coercive, in the courſe of their miniſtry, how much occaſion ſoever hereſy, apoſtacy, and other flagrant crimes in the churches they had planted, gave them for it. ELYMAS, indeed, was ſtruck blind by St. PAUL, and ANANIAS and

SAPHIRA fell dead at the feet of St. PETER. But theſe were particular and extraordinary interpoſitions of providence. CHRIST gave no inſtruction for the exerciſe of ſuch judgments in any caſe. He had reproved this kind of ſpirit in his diſciples, when he was among them, and as long as his ſpirit remained in his church, the moſaical ſpirit, as oppoſite to his law, as to the law of nature, could not ariſe. When they, who called themſelves the ſucceſſors of his apoſtles, hearkened to the ſuggeſtions of their paſſions, and called them zeal; that is, when political rather than religious motives guided them, they imitated MOSES, outdo him they could not: and beſides perſecuting to convert, they not only promoted the utmoſt ſeverity of puniſhment againſt thoſe who fell back into idolatry or judaiſm, or who embraced any hereſy; but, like MOSES, they pretended to do all this by the command of GOD: ſo that the church of CHRIST imitated, in this inſtance, as it did in many more when it was fallen into corruption, and not before, ſuch inſtitutions as the church and ſtate of the Jews adopted in the primitive purity, ſuch as that purity was, of their original eſtabliſhment.

UPON the whole matter, a chriſtian, who takes his religion from the goſpel, and not from ſyſtems of theology, far from being under any obligation of believing, is under the ſtrongeſt of rejecting every law, whether perpetual or occaſional, whether given to the Jews alone or to them and to others, that is evidently repugnant to the law of nature and of right reaſon, to the precepts of the goſpel, to the example of CHRIST, to the practice of his firſt diſciples, and to the genuine ſpirit of the religion they taught. If this was the ſpirit of God in the days of CHRIST, it was the ſpirit of GOD in the days of MOSES: and whatever difference there might be in the ſeveral diſpenſations, and the objects of them GOD could have effected

effected his purpoſes without contradicting his ſpirit. We may believe any thing ſooner than this, that immutability admits of change; and yet we muſt admit both the contradiction and the change, if we give entire credit to all that we find related, and as it ſtands related, in the books of the old Teſtament.

XXI.

I HAVE quoted from father SIMON, in one of my Letters * to my lord CORNBURY, a divine of the faculty of Paris, who held that the authenticity of theſe books, and divine inſpiration of their authors, ſhould be underſtood to extend no further than to matters purely of doctrine, or to ſuch as have a neceſſary connection with theſe. Upon the ſame and even a ſtronger principle of reaſon, we may aſſert that as the ſacred writers have no claim to inſpiration, when they write on other ſubjects; ſo neither have they when they write any thing on theſe which is evidently inconſiſtent with right reaſon, in matters that are proper objects of reaſon, and with the firſt principles of natural law, which are at the ſame time the firſt principles of chriſtianity. What the french divine advanced, and what I have advanced here, will be treated as an impious paradox by ſome of thoſe trifling ſolemn dogmatiſts in criticiſm and theology, who have advanced ſo many abſurd and impious, really impious, paradoxes of their own. But let us ſee, in the preſent caſe, on whoſe ſide the paradox and the impiety lie. I ſay that the law of nature is the law of GOD. Of this I have the ſame demonſtrative knowledge, that I have of the exiſtence of GOD, the all-perfect Being. I ſay that the all-perfect Being cannot contradict himſelf; that he would

* Let. III.

contradict

contradict himself if the laws contained in the thirteenth chapter of Deuteronomy, to mention no others here, were his laws, since they contradict those of nature, and therefore that they are not his laws. Of all this I have as certain, as intuitive knowledge, as I have that two and two are equal to four, or that the whole is bigger than a part. From these indisputable premises I conclude, that all those expressions in the text, which ascribe these laws to GOD, are uninspired, perhaps interpolated, but undoubtedly false. What now does the dogmatist do? He begs the question, and he pretends to demonstrate. His premises are precarious, and his conclusion is a paradox. He imputes, directly, to the author of nature, what he is forced to own unjust and cruel, according to the laws of nature; and he pretends to justify the all-perfect Being, whom he has thus accused, by inconclusive and sophistical arguments.

I HAVE touched this point above; but since I recollect that Mr. LOCKE has insisted on a solution of the difficulty, which, I think, and am not afraid to call inconclusive and sophistical, it is worth my while to bestow a few more words upon it. There is a respect due even to the mistakes of that great man, the respect I mean of giving a reason for not submitting to his authority, which I would not pay to every dull commentator, nor frothy declaimer that should argue like him, or from him. We know, from some of his writings, how easily he received every hypothesis that favored, or that seemed to favor, the authenticity of the jewish scriptures, notwithstanding all he said in his chapter of probability; and Mr. COSTE, the translator of his famous essay, who knew him well, accounted for this, and some other contradictions, by a strange timidity of temper, which made him often waver in his own abstract philosophical notions, when he came to apply them to any of his

his religious prejudices. He believed, on very insufficient authority, that the one true GOD was known to the Jews alone, and that the rest of mankind were polytheists and idolaters from the beginning. Thus he might receive too some other theological assumptions: this, for instance, as presumptuous and impertinent as it is, to assign the sufficient reason that infinite wisdom had for doing in one manner what infinite power might have done in several, "that it was ne-" cessary GOD should separate a chosen people from the rest " of mankind, in order to preserve among mankind the " knowledge of himself in his unity:" or this, that "the " choice fell on the Israelites not for their own merit," since no nation upon earth could have less towards GOD or man, but, "for the merit of their forefathers," of ABRAHAM famous in the east, the patriarch of the Arabians as well as of the Jews, of ISAAC his son, and of JACOB his grandson, of whom it is said in the scriptures, that they were preferred in the womb to ISMAEL and to ESAU, without assigning any apparent reason for this preference, since they could have no personal merit so early, and the reason of which must have been therefore this, that the Israelites were to descend from them; which looks as if the fathers were chosen for the sake of the sons, rather than the sons for the sake of the fathers. Mr. LOCKE, who could embrace such hypotheses as these, might easily assume, as he did assume, that "in order to keep " up this separation, and to secure the effects of it, the Su-" preme Being submitted to be not only the tutelary deity of " this people, as he had been of their fathers, and to make a " covenant with them, but to be their local deity, and even " literally as much their king as their GOD."

THAT he was such a king, Mr. LOCKE asserted, and on that assertion he distinguished between the mosaical, and all other laws,

laws, in his letter concerning toleration. By the former, idolaters were to be rooted out, he ſays; but the former is not obligatory on Chriſtians, and therefore urged by intolerants very abſurdly in favor of perſecution. The jewiſh commonwealth, different from all others, was an abſolute theocracy; no difference could be made between that commonwealth and the church; religious laws were the civil laws of that people, and part of their political government, in which GOD himſelf was the legiſlator. The citizens, therefore, of that commonwealth, who apoſtatiſed, were proceeded againſt as traitors and rebels, guilty of no leſs than high treaſon. Let it be ſo. The objections of injuſtice and cruelty to theſe laws will remain in their full force, and be of more weight to prove them human, than all theſe hypotheſes to prove them divine. God was king, and idolatry was no leſs than high treaſon; no objection therefore can lie againſt the puniſhment of it. None certainly, but every objection to the manner and degree in which this puniſhment was to be inflicted, ſtands good; for if we can believe GOD to have been a king, we can never believe him to have been ſuch a king as he is deſcribed, nor to have given ſuch laws as MOSES gave in his name. Is it not enough to reduce, in our notions, the Supreme Being to the ſtate of an earthly monarch, unleſs we degrade the all-perfect Being, in them, to the character of an unjuſt and cruel tyrant, who authoriſed, and even commanded his miniſters expreſly to puniſh without meaſure, without diſcernment, and without forms of juſtice? Can it be obligatory on a Chriſtian to believe this which Mr. LOCKE believed? Surely not; no more than to believe that it is obligatory on him at this day, to puniſh heretics by virtue of theſe laws, which opinion Mr. LOCKE diſclaimed, and againſt which he wrote this very treatiſe.

I NEED not take notice of the indulgence which Mr. LOCKE obſerves, to the honor of the moſaical law, was ſhewn by it to ſtrangers. The obſervation is not ſtrictly within my ſubject; for I never affirmed, that all the laws of MOSES were repugnant to the law of nature. But what was this indulgence? Strangers were not compelled by force, and on pain of death, to embrace judaiſm, nor were the Iſraelites commanded to exterminate the Moabites, and other foreign nations, unleſs they renounced their idolatry. The taſk might have been too hard for the choſen people, and they did not want, at that time, any more land than that of the ſeven nations. If they had wanted more, they would have ſoon had a law to take it, and to exterminate the rightful poſſeſſors, as they had a promiſe, and a law which authoriſed them to conquer and deſtroy the Canaanites. Mr. LOCKE, indeed, adds another reaſon for this deſtruction. GOD had choſen Canaan for his kingdom, as well as the Iſraelites for his ſubjects, and he could not ſuffer the adoration of any other deity in his kingdom, tho', in fact, other deities continued to be adored there, with or without the conſent of his people. More reflections on the manner of ſtating facts, as well as of arguing, may be made; but theſe are more than enough, to ſhew in one inſtance more, and by the way, into how low a form the greateſt writers fall, when they attempt to reconcile to common ſenſe, or common honeſty, many paſſages of traditions inconſiſtent with both. The Jews, or the penmen of theſe traditions, had ſo little of either, that they repreſent ſometimes a patriarch like JACOB, and ſometimes a ſaint like DAVID, by characters that can belong to none but the very worſt of men. Can we be ſurpriſed, then, that they aſcribed to the all-perfect Being, on various occaſions, ſuch a conduct, and ſuch laws as are inconſiſtent with his moſt obvious perfections? Can we believe ſuch a conduct, and ſuch laws,

laws, to have been his, on the word of the proudeſt and moſt lying nation of the world?

MANY other conſiderations, ſome of which have been occaſionally mentioned, in what I have writ to you, might have their place here. But I ſhall confine myſelf to one, which I do not remember to have ſeen, nor heard urged on one ſide, nor anticipated on the other. To ſhew then, the more evidently, how abſurd, as well as impious, it is to aſcribe theſe moſaical laws to GOD, let it be conſidered, that neither the people of Iſrael, nor their legiſlator perhaps, knew any thing of another life, wherein the crimes committed in this life are to be puniſhed; altho' he might have learned this doctrine, which was not ſo much a ſecret doctrine as it may be preſumed that the unity of the Supreme God was, among the Egyptians. Whether he had learned both, or either, or neither of them in thoſe ſchools, cannot be determined; but this may be advanced with aſſurance. If MOSES knew that crimes, and therefore idolatry, one of the greateſt, were to be puniſhed in another life, he deceived the people in the covenant they made by his intervention with God. If he did not know it, I ſay it with horror, the conſequence, according to the hypotheſis I oppoſe, muſt be, that God deceived both him and them. In either caſe, a covenant or bargain was made, wherein the conditions of obedience and diſobedience were not fully, nor by conſequence fairly ſtated. The Iſraelites had better things to hope, and worſe to fear, than thoſe that were expreſſed in it; and their whole hiſtory ſeems to ſhew how much need they had of theſe additional motives, to reſtrain them from polytheiſm and idolatry, and to anſwer the aſſumed purpoſes of divine providence.

XXII.

THE rough draughts, that have been thrown upon theſe papers, may help to ſhew that there is ſuch a thing as the law of nature, antecedent to all other laws, and to the eſtabliſhment of civil ſociety; that this law is the law of reaſon collected "à poſteriori" from the actual conſtitution of things, by experience and obſervation; that as inſtinct, affections, paſſions, and ſelf-love that univerſal ſpring of the animal kind, were given to put us into action, ſo this law is given to guide and govern the human conduct; that if this law did univerſally and conſtantly guide and govern it, mankind would reach the perfection of their nature, and be as happy as they are by this made capable of being; but that the culture of their reaſon, the improvement of their knowledge, and every thing that tends to the perfection of their nature, and the completion of their happineſs, being left to their induſtry, and ſubjected to the accidents and viciſſitudes of human affairs, ſome few remain in ignorance, many more fall into error, and the irrational prevails over the rational nature, in different degrees, in all of them; that the ſtate of mankind is imperfect, in proportion as the uſe that they make of their reaſon is ſo; that the will of GOD ſignified by the law of nature, and revealed in his works, a revelation that admits of no doubt, ſhews the road to human happineſs to all mankind; that they are ſeduced out of it by falſe appearances, and that law, cuſtom, and even religion, which ſhould have kept them in it, confirm theſe appearances, and only ſerve to keep them out of it.

IF it be difficult to ſhew the particular reaſons that have contributed, in an immenſe variety of inſtances, to render the laws and cuſtoms of mankind ſo oppoſite to one another as

as they are, and ſo oppoſite, or ſo little conformable, to the law of nature and of right reaſon, which ſhould have been the model, and muſt be made the criterion of them all, it is eaſy enough to diſcover what has rendered the religions, that have ariſen in the world, from the firſt ages of it, ſo oppoſite in many particular modes, ſo ſimilar in many general principles, and all of them together ſo little conformable to natural religion.

These religions inſtituted by human, under the maſk of divine authority, tho' they might be intended to reſtrain and reform mankind, to give ſtronger ſanctions to the law of nature, and to be ſubſervient to government, have ſerved, in all ages, to very different purpoſes. They have promoted falſe conceptions of the deity, they have ſubſtituted ſuperſtition in the place of thoſe real duties which we owe to God and man, they have added new occaſions to thoſe that ſubſiſted before of enmity and ſtrife; and inſociability has increaſed as they have floriſhed. Nay, the firſt principles of them have been laid in it in direct oppoſition to the religion of nature and reaſon, the firſt principle of which is a ſociability that flows from univerſal benevolence. We are obliged to except, out of the religions inſtituted by human authority, the jewiſh and the chriſtian; but we cannot except even theſe as one of them was taught originally, as the other of them has been taught in the courſe of it, and as both of them have been practiſed, out of the religions that have ſerved to the ill purpoſes here mentioned, to that principally of inſociability. On the contrary, no religions have rendered the profeſſors of them ſo inſociable to other men, as thoſe which have claimed truly or falſly to be immediate revelations of the Supreme Being, and have exacted an implicit faith as well as an implicit obedience. Inſociability was from the firſt, and continues ſtill, the great

characteriſtic of judaiſm. So it was, and ſo it is of mahometiſm. So it was not of goſpel-chriſtianity, but ſo it is become of theological chriſtianity; if I may be allowed to make a diſtinction which will juſtify itſelf abundantly in every inſtance of compariſon.

THE wiſdom, as well as the power, that appears in the whole conſtruction, order, and harmony of the univerſe, muſt have carried at all times the ſame general conviction into the breaſt of every man who obſerved, and reflected on his own obſervations. BALBUS had therefore ſufficient reaſon to ſay, in a good ſenſe, what TULLY makes him ſay, that "he muſt want "intelligence himſelf who can believe that this ſtupendous "machine was made and is preſerved without intelligence," that is without diſtinct and ſuperior intelligence, not without intelligence of it's own; the intelligence of the maker, not that of the thing made, for this is ſuch an abſurdity as the refinements of philoſophy alone could adopt, and as can be never reconciled to the judgment of common ſenſe. "Ce-"leſtem ergo admirabilem ordinem . . . . qui vacare mente "putat, is ipſe mentis expers habendus eſt," may be under-"ſtood indeed to ſignify this very abſurdity in the mouth of a ſtoic, and TULLY might mean to make BALBUS ſpeak in character, for which reaſon the paſſage ſhould never be quoted without any explanation as it is continually, for an expoſition of true theiſm. But if the ſphere of POSIDONIUS had been ſent to the Britons, or to the Scythians, in the days of BALBUS and TULLY; if the machine called, I know not why, the Orrery, was ſent, in our days, to the Hottentots, or the Samojedes, theſe ſavages would ſmile at the ſtupidity of any of their brethren, if any ſo ſtupid ſhould be found among ſavages, who could imagine ſuch a machine to be the effect of chance, or to have contrived, and made itſelf. They would all conclude,

clude, that it was the work of intelligence, and of greater ſkill than that which they imployed to build their huts, or to ſhape their canoes. The moſt reaſonable among them could not fail to ſee, in the unity of the deſign, the unity of the artificer. But the vulgar, who make themſelves, their own ideas, and their own manners, the meaſure of all things, might very eaſily conclude, that the ſeveral parts of this machine were made, and the ſeveral motions of it were directed, by different intelligences. This opinion too might grow up to be general amongſt them, and the moſt rational ſavages might be obliged to yield to the leaſt rational, in advancing of which no more is aſſumed than what has happened in every age and country, even the moſt civiliſed, and the leaſt ignorant. But none of theſe ſavages would be abſurd enough to ſuppoſe, tho' philoſophers ſuch as the ſtoicians have done little leſs, that the intelligence which made every wheel of the machine to move was in the wheel.

THE Romans, the Greeks, and before them all the learned nations of the eaſt, were in this caſe. The vulgar acknowledged a multitude of divinities, to whom they aſcribed every excellency, and every defect of their own nature, ſo that in worſhipping them they worſhipped in ſome ſort themſelves. Their wiſe men, who acknowledged the unity of a Supreme Being, and held theſe inferior divinities to be his creatures and miniſters, made even this being after their own image. The lovers of eaſe made him an indolent being, and wholly unconcerned about human affairs. The proud, who thought every thing that related to man equally important, and equally an object worthy of the divine care, made him a buſy trifling being. "MYRMECIDES aliquis, minutorum opuſculorum fa-" bricator." They who converted, with prophane timidity, a reverential awe into a ſuperſtitious fear of GOD, and made

the exiſtence of a Supreme Being, which ought to be the comfort, the terror of mankind, ran into one of theſe extremes. They either ſcreened him from human ſight by the interpoſition of mediating, interceding, attoning beings: or, fierce and cruel themſelves, they repreſented him hating without reaſon, revenging without provocation, and puniſhing without meaſure. The gay, the wanton, the luxurious, made gods and goddeſſes of the ſame characters; and JUPITER himſelf, the father of gods and men, was liable to human paſſions, and partook of ſenſual pleaſures. Thus the vulgar believed, and thus the prieſts encouraged; whilſt the philoſophers, overborne by the torrent of polytheiſm, ſuffered them to believe, in ages when true theiſm was reputed atheiſm. There were others again who had, beſides that vanity which is common to all men, the particular vanity of believing themſelves choſen objects of the care of heaven, diſtinguiſhed by ſingular privileges, and predeſtinated to ſome glorious purpoſe or other. The Egyptians were the firſt of all men admitted to the ſight of the gods, and to a communication with them, according to JAMBLICHUS, and we may ſee what notions had been inſtilled into the Romans, of grandeur, and empire, to which they were deſigned by the gods, when we read the pompous anſwer that JUPITER makes to his daughter, in the firſt book of the Æneid. I wave any further inſtances of the ſame kind: that of the Iſraelites, the moſt extraordinary of any, is too well known to be mentioned.

IT is unneceſſary too that I ſhould enumerate, in this place, any of thoſe metaphyſical whimſies, concerning the divine and human nature, which philoſophers broached, and brought into faſhion; as the vulgar had brought, tho' they had not been alone to invent, all the falſe conceptions that prevailed about the deity. Much has been ſaid already, and more will be

be ſaid on that ſubject. What is to my purpoſe to obſerve here is, that the ſyſtems of theology, which philoſophers, prieſts, and the rabble of the world, conſpired to frame, were ſyſtems of ſuperſtition, that they paſſed however for ſyſtems of religion revealed ſome how or other, to ſomebody or other, ſometimes by the Supreme Being himſelf, ſometimes by any other divine perſon, and, therefore, always of more authority than ſuch as human reaſon could collect from the appearances of things. This perſuaſion too made it quite unneceſſary to employ human reaſon about ſo ſuperfluous a work, and thus an immenſe crop of ſuperſtitions grew up, choaked the ſeeds of natural religion, and corrupted, in a great degree, both public and private morality. In ſhort, reaſon has been always controuled, natural religion and natural law have been almoſt entirely ſuperſeded in every ſociety of men, and many inſtances might be produced to ſhew that this has happened moſt in thoſe which have been eſteemed the moſt civiliſed. This has been the effect of imagination and paſſion, neceſſary, but dangerous, parts of our compoſition, under the influence of particular prejudices, and the direction of private motives in matters of the moſt public concern. If the revelations had not been pretended only, if the ſame divine wiſdom, that ſhews both the exiſtence and the will of God in his works, had preſcribed any particular form of worſhip to mankind, and had inſpired the particular applications of his general laws, the ſyſtem of religious and civil government would have been uniform in the whole world, as well as conformable to nature, and reaſon, and the ſtate of mankind would have arrived at human perfection. But it was not in the councils of the moſt High, which it becomes us to adore and not to examine, that this ſhould be ſo, and therefore all theſe ſyſtems of religions and laws being nothing more than human expedients, there is no room to wonder that they

have not been more effectual to good purpoſes, nor that the ſtate of mankind is ſuch as we feel, and as we are apt to complain that it is.

XXIII.

WE may aſſure, from fact, that this has been the divine œconomy, and leave thoſe men to aſſume from imagination what this œconomy has, or ſhould have been, who have ſo much theological preſumption. But whilſt we leave them to imagine without fact, we muſt not ſuffer them to imagine againſt it. Nothing can be, I think, more true than what has been advanced concerning the unnatural religions, laws, and cuſtoms eſtabliſhed in the ſeveral ſocieties of men, and yet it is not leſs true, that the tables of natural religion and law are hung up in the ſight of all men. All may read them, and tho' error has prevailed, and will ever prevail in the bulk of mankind againſt knowledge, more or leſs, and to ſome degree, becauſe it is agreeable to the private intereſts of thoſe who lead, and to the prejudices of thoſe who are led, that it ſhould, I do not believe that there ever was a time, when it could be ſaid with truth that the law of nature was imperfectly known, or that it was an incomplete ſyſtem of morality before the chriſtian revelation, both of which propoſitions are roundly advanced by divines, tho' manifeſtly falſe.

Dr. CLARKE ſays, in his evidences of natural and revealed religion, which are often dim, and often weak, that the heathen philoſophers were never able to prove and explain clearly and diſtinctly enough to perſons of all capacities thoſe things which they were the moſt fully certain of, and did in good meaſure underſtand, ſuch as the obligations of virtue, and

and the will of God, in matters of morality. Now if it could be reconciled to common ſenſe that they underſtood not fully, but in good meaſure only, ſuch doctrines as they are ſaid in the ſame ſentence to have been fully certain of, there would be no occaſion to wonder that they were unable to prove and explain them. But to paſs this over, the reaſons alledged to ſhew their inability in this reſpect, or that they underſtood theſe things in good meaſure only, are ſuch as give, indeed, great occaſion to wonder when they fall from the pen of ſo able a writer. Their diſcourſes, he ſays, were rather ſpeculative and learned, nice and ſubtile diſputes, than practical and uſeful inſtructions; the bulk of mankind could not profit by the ſublime doctrine of Plato, for inſtance. Agreed. The difficulty then of diſcovering, and explaining the will of God, in matters of morality, and the whole ſyſtem of natural religion aroſe merely from the method they took of diſcovering it to themſelves, and of explaining it to others. That is, they did by this ſyſtem the very thing which divines have done by that of chriſtianity. Philoſophers departed from the ſimplicity of nature, divines from that of the goſpel. Had the former been content to collect the will of God, as far as it concerns the duty of man, from what they knew of themſelves, of their fellow-creatures, and of the conſtitution, phyſical and moral, of the world, they had neither bewildered themſelves nor grown unintelligible to others. But they could not be ſo content. Many of theſe antient, like their mimics, the modern reaſoners, "à priori," undertook to deduce the religion of human nature and of human reaſon, from principles that exiſt infinitely beyond them. They knew human nature, and from thence they might, by the help of human reaſon, have taught very clearly what they underſtood very fully. They did both when they kept within theſe bounds, but when they went beyond them, they did neither. When they pre-

tended to contemplate the nature and moral attributes of the Supreme Being, they were, indeed, as unqualified for it as bats are to behold the light of the ſun. They puzzled the cleareſt, and confounded the moſt diſtinct ideas, ſometimes by metaphyſical enthuſiaſm, and ſometimes by political deſign; for when ſuch miſts are conjured up in the moſt ſerene parts of our intellectual ſyſtem, it cannot be intended by men who are in their ſenſes, one would think, to make us ſee better, and, therefore, I could never read the propoſition, that we may eaſily know God, if we be not ignorant of ourſelves, ſo abſolutely advanced, nor that ſtrange parallel between God and the ſoul of man, wherein Dr. Barrow confeſſes that he indulged his thoughts ſomewhat freely*, without being ſorry to find them in the works of ſo reſpectable an author.

Another reaſon, brought by Clarke, to ſhew how unable theſe philoſophers were to prove and explain the obligations of natural religion is this. They were never able to frame to themſelves any complete, and regular, and conſiſtent ſyſtem or ſcheme of things. If by theſe words be meaned, as it muſt be in this place, ſuch a ſyſtem or ſcheme of morality, the fact aſſerted is untrue, how excellently ſoever the eloquent Lactantius may have ſet this matter forth, or the judicious Justin may have ſupported our modern doctor. In contradiction to all three, we may affirm boldly, becauſe truly, that there is no one moral virtue which has not been taught, explained and proved, by the heathen philoſophers, both occaſionally and purpoſely. It is, therefore, particularly abſurd, in chriſtian writers, to ſay as the author of the evidences ſays, after his two guides, that theſe philoſophers did, indeed, diſcover all the particular doctrines of true religion, but that no one of

* Vol. II. Serm vii.

them

them made a ſcheme true in all it's parts, nor did any one collect the ſeveral truths ſcattered up and down in their writings. For, I aſk, are all the truths of natural and revealed religion collected into one regular and complete ſyſtem in any of the goſpels, or even of the epiſtles? did any one of the fathers of the church make an entire ſcheme of religion or morality true in all it's parts? will any man have the front to deny that they all mingled ſome truth and ſome error? did not this very LACTANTIUS, did not JUSTIN do ſo? did any one of the fathers collect the truths that concern all our moral obligations, ſeparate them from the errors, and make a regular complete ſyſtem of the whole? will it be ſaid that St. AMBROSE did? but St. AMBROSE was a poor imitator of TULLY. In ſhort, all the heathen philoſophers agreed, that the practice of virtue was of neceſſary and indiſpenſable obligation, and that the happineſs of mankind depended on it in general and in particular. They all agreed likewiſe what was virtue, and what was vice; and if they had any diſputes about the great principles of natural, Chriſtians had the ſame about the great principles of revealed religion. They had ſuch in the days of JUSTIN and of LACTANTIUS, and that they continued to have them in our days, CLARKE himſelf has been a ſignal example.

IT was neither natural theology, nor ethics, that perplexed natural religion. It was metaphyſical theology. Antient, like modern, heathen, like chriſtian philoſophers, had indeed many trifling diſputes about words, the ſtoics particularly, or about things ſo very plain that nothing leſs than grecian acuteneſs could make them appear at all intricate. Such were thoſe about the "ſummum bonum*," in which it is ſaid,

* VARRO, St. AUSTIN.

there

there were two hundred and fourſcore different opinions. That there were ſo many may be doubted, but that they muſt have been extremely various is certain. The "ſummum "bonum", or the ſupreme good of man, as it was underſtood and taught by the heathen philoſophers, and which Dr. CLARKE calls, not without a deſigned ambiguity, the final happineſs of man, was a ſubject whereon every man had a right to pronounce for himſelf, and no man had a right to pronounce for another. Theſe diſputes were, therefore, very trifling. But they ſhould not be ſo ſtrongly objected, ſince it is eaſy to ſhew that chriſtian divines, the ſchoolmen eſpecially, have trifled as much on points relative to natural and revealed religion both, as ever the heathen did on points relative to the former. Of the chriſtian trifles too, we may ſay, what could not be ſaid of the others, that they became ſerious: "hæ "nugæ ad ſeria ducunt." They have divided the ſchools, and the ſchools have divided the world, with circumſtances of rage and cruelty to be found among no other parties.

XXIV.

IF ſuch diſputes, as that which has been mentioned, were eaſy, or might be thought unneceſſary to be determined, diſputes of another kind aroſe when the heathen philoſophers attempted, for they did attempt, to make a complete, regular, and conſiſtent ſyſtem or ſcheme of things, the want of which is objected to them. Theſe attempts were puſhed very far by pagan theiſts, but it muſt be confeſſed, that they ſerved only to ſhew that men are fitted to know a little of ſome few things, and the whole of nothing. Theſe men found ſoon, that no ſufficient materials for ſuch a ſyſtem or ſcheme lay within the bounds of natural law, and natural theology. They had recourſe,

courſe, therefore, to metaphyſical theology, which being a ſcience of their own invention, it was eaſy for them to eſtabliſh ſuch principles in it, as they judged ſufficient for their purpoſe. They proceeded, therefore, to reverſe the whole order of reaſoning in the ſearch of truth, to reverſe the pyramid; and inſtead of riſing up from a broad foundation of particulars, laid in knowledge, to the lofty and narrow pinnacle of all knowledge, the exiſtence of one all-perfect Being, they affected prepoſterouſly to ſet this pinnacle on the ground, and to raiſe the pyramid without any foundations at all. They not only reaſoned concerning the nature and attributes of GOD himſelf, from mere imagination, but they gave him as many companions, and miniſters, gods, angels, dæmons, genii, as they thought fit. CLARKE ſays, and moſt of his brethren agree with him, that to reaſon in this manner from the nature and attributes of GOD, is the very firſt and moſt neceſſary thing of all. His and their approbation of the reaſoning of pagan theiſts, in conſequence of this firſt and moſt neceſſary thing of all, would not be quite ſo full; and indeed it may ſeem to have been introduced for ornament, rather than for uſe, by thoſe who made the one Supreme Being, according to the nature and attributes they give him, ſo immediately active in human affairs. But the pagan theiſts declined no help; and the ſervice their gods, and other inferior beings were of, in accounting for the creation and government of the world, is known to every man who has been converſant in their writings, in thoſe of PLATO particularly. When they wanted to account for the origin of evil, ditheiſm was invented; when they wanted to account for the ſuppoſed unjuſt diſtribution of good and evil, the "mythologia de inferis."

BUT to be more particular. CLARKE obſerves, that bare reaſon cannot diſcover in what manner, and with what kind

of

of external ſervice God will be worſhipped. He might have added, that bare reaſon cannot diſcover how any external ſervice, that man can pay, ſhould be acceptable to the Supreme, and all-perfect Being, except a compliance in all our words and actions, with his known will, revealed in his works, an inward adoration of his unknown nature, a gratitude for benefits, and an entire reſignation to his providence. The heathens knew that all the duties of natural religion are contained under theſe heads, but that the divine will concerning any external ſervice, with which God would be worſhipped, had been ſignified relatively to none of theſe duties. They might, therefore, as the beſt and wiſeſt of them did, approve the political inſtitutions of an external ſervice, as political inſtitutions, and as far as they helped to keep up a lively ſenſe of theſe duties in the minds of men, and to promote the practice of them. But they, who preſumed to reaſon boldly, about the nature and attributes of God, were not ſo content. They repreſented the one Supreme Being, to themſelves and others, under as many different characters as they repreſented their different gods. The moſt general repreſentation of him, becauſe it was thought the moſt proper to intimidate mankind, and to anſwer the ends of government, or becauſe it was that which natural and ſuperſtitious fear could the moſt eaſily frame, was framed under the image of an abſolute tyrannical monarch. From ſuch notions, theſe reaſoners "à priori" deduced all thoſe, whereby they took men out of the relation of creatures to their creator, and placed them in that of ſlaves to their tyrant. From hence thoſe numberleſs, ridiculous, and cruel rites of paganiſm, which were held as neceſſary to obtain the favor, and to avert the anger of heaven, as the ſtricteſt obſervation of morality; nay more neceſſary, if we may judge, as we may moſt reaſonably, of ancient by modern, and of pagan by chriſtian theology.

OBEDIENCE to the law of nature is our firſt duty, and our greateſt intereſt: the happineſs of our whole kind, wherein every individual is included, depends on it. Obedience carries it's reward, diſobedience it's puniſhment along with it in the general ſyſtem, and GOD has not made particular ſyſtems, nor eſtabliſhed particular providences for particular nations, much leſs for particular men, as far as we can diſcover by the help of reaſon and experience. The ſame cauſes produce the ſame effects every where, with ſome little variety of circumſtances, and as the precepts of the law are common to all men, ſo are the ſanctions of it. In ſhort, as all men ſin againſt the order of nature more or leſs, ſo the imperfect ſtate of mankind ſhews that they ſuffer more or leſs by the uniform courſe of it. But neither reaſon nor experience will ſhew us, in the author of nature, an angry revengeful judge, or a bloody executioner. Neither reaſon nor experience will lead us to inquire what propitiation God will accept, nor in what manner a reconciliation between the Supreme Being and this worm man is to be made *. Natural reaſon does not ſtop here, nor expect with impatience the aid of ſome particular revelation. She ſtops much ſooner. Repentance, as it implies amendment, is one of her doctrines, a neceſſary conſequence of her principles, and ſhe does not ſo much as ſuſpect that any further revelation is wanting to eſtabliſh it. But the reaſoners "à priori" did on falſe principles, in this caſe, and in many others, what an unreaſoning vulgar had done thro' ignorance, and without any principles at all, except thoſe of ſuperſtition. They took off from the real perfections of the Supreme Being, and they added imaginary excellencies to the human nature: like PROCRUSTES, they ſtretched out humanity, and lopped

* CLARKE in his evid.

off from divinity; with great metaphyſical pains, as much as they could; and when they found that one of theſe lines was ſtill too ſhort, and the other ſtill too long, to anſwer their purpoſe, of making them nearly commenſurate, they ſpun a thread out of imagination, to lengthen the ſhorteſt.

On ſuch notions of the divine and human nature, Egyptian, Chaldæan, Magian, and almoſt all the theiſts of antiquity, founded their theology, on the authority of which they inſtituted various forms of worſhip, and promoted ſuperſtitious opinions, by their attempts to diſcover the whole ſcheme and ſyſtem of things, ſome of which infected even the fathers of our church in antient times, and would be avowed at this time by none but roſicrucians, and fanatics as mad as them. In fine, this was the ſource from which ſo many religious ceremonies and obſervances, that had no direction to promote natural religion, tho' pretending to derive their inſtitution from the author of it, aroſe. Sins were multiplied, and the terrors of ſuperſtitious minds encreaſed. But even if theſe terrors had been rightly and ſolely applied to real crimes, not of ſins of arbitrary diſcipline, they would have been of little effect, ſince the means of reconciling all ſinners to an offended deity were made by this theology extremely eaſy. Strange means indeed they were, and ſuch as coſt the offender little. Such were expiatory ſacrifices, wherein the blood of an innocent beaſt, or man, was ſhed to atone for the guilty perſon, as if God was appeaſed whenever the prieſts were glutted with roaſt meat, or as if it were indifferent to him whoſe blood was ſhed, provided his altars reeked with gore. This expiation was puſhed to ſuch a degree of pious inhumanity, that fathers made burnt offerings of their children to Moloch. I call it pious, becauſe they who never offered up themſelves ſeemed however to prove their repentance, as Abraham was ready to prove his faith

faith much better, by ſacrificing their children, than a ram or an ox. They ſacrificed what they held deareſt next to themſelves; and they might think that they had the example of the Gods, to authoriſe the practice; for SANCHONIATHON, it is ſaid, related, that SATURN had offered up his only ſon in the time of a plague. "Cœlo patri in ho- "locauſtum obtulit."

THIS was one effect of theological engraftments on natural religion. The Supreme Being was repreſented ſo vindicative and cruel, that nothing leſs than acts of the utmoſt cruelty could appeaſe his anger, and that his prieſts were ſo many butchers of men and other animals. Another engraftment of the ſame kind was deduced from a very contrary notion, from a notion that GOD was conſtantly attentive to the affairs of men, to the leaſt, and to the moſt important alike; that he entered into the cloſeſt familiarity with ſome, and gave audience at all times to all. Aſtoniſhing inſtances of this ſort, as well as of the former, might be cited; for the ſame theology, which repreſented the all-perfect Being rigorous and ſevere without any regard to his mercy, or even to his juſtice, repreſented him, with moſt theological inconſiſtency, on other occaſions gracious, converſable, affable, without any regard to his majeſty, or to the infinite ſuperiority of his nature. But theſe inſtances are ſo eaſily found, and they are ſo ſhocking to every ſincere theiſt who frames the moſt elevated, and therefore the leaſt unworthy ſentiments he is able of GOD, that I am willing to ſave myſelf and you the trouble of reflecting on them. "Ita tætra ſunt, ut ea fugiat & reformidet oratio*." How ſhould they be otherwiſe, when ignorance and ſuperſtition were firſt to produce them, and when the eternal unal-

* CIC. Tuſc. Diſp.

terable reaſon of things, the knowledge of which is claimed by men, who approve ſome of the moſt deteſtable of theſe inſtances, and who produce others of their own growth, but upon the ſame principles, is for the moſt part nothing elſe than the reaſon of party, of prejudice, of profeſſion, and of authority? Let me, therefore, mention one alone. It ſhall be one that is common to all religions, and that carries with it, in general practice, more matter of ridicule than of horror. The inſtance, I mean, is prayer; or, to ſpeak more properly, the abuſe of prayer. To keep up a due ſenſe of our dependance on God, for which purpoſe this inſtitution may be a very uſeful, and conſequently, a very rational expedient, is the duty of every man. But then it muſt be practiſed in a manner reconcileable to other duties of religion; in the firſt place, to an awful reverence which conſiſts in the inward ſentiment wholly, and ſo little in outward demonſtrations that when theſe are carried too far they become a ludicrous pageantry of devotion, and ſerve rather to deſtroy it in moſt minds than to maintain it in any; to an abſolute reſignation in the next place, one act of which is preferable to ten thouſand collects. Men are fond of acceſs to the Supreme Being. Nothing can flatter humanity ſo much. As ſoon, therefore, as they are taught that they may have it, not only by their proxies, the prieſts, but by themſelves immediately, they uſe it familiarly and impertinently. They put up contradictory petitions to heaven in all the churches of the world. Some would be hurtful to themſelves if they were granted, and almoſt all would be ſo to others. If the true GOD could be importuned, as LUCIAN repreſents JUPITER, he would be importuned to change at every moment the diſpoſitions of his infinite wiſdom, and to accommodate the whole œconomy of his providence in a manner that implies often contradiction, to different and oppoſite intereſts, nay to the different and

oppoſite caprices, not of nations alone, but of particular men, women, and children.

SINCE I have mentioned this part of divine worſhip, among other external ſervices, it may be proper to take notice of the ſecond Alcibiades which Mr. CLARKE quotes, and which will ſerve, if I miſtake not, my purpoſe better than his. In that dialogue, SOCRATES inſiſts on the danger of addreſſing particular petitions to the gods, leſt we ſhould aſk what is evil in itſelf, or what may prove ſo in the event. He recites the prayer of ſome antient poet, which is little elſe than a ſhort act of reſignation. He commends the Lacedæmonians for addreſſing themſelves in much the ſame ſtyle to the gods, when they aſked in general "pulchra cum bonis." He mentions the preference given by the oracle of JUPITER HAMMON to the prayers of the Lacedæmonians over thoſe of the Athenians, and the reſt of the Greeks. The authority of HOMER is brought, as PLATO, PLUTARCH, and generally the ancient writers are apt to alledge it on all occaſions very impertinently, to prove that the gods are prone to be angry, and to bear hatred even to whole nations. But SOCRATES concludes very rationally, that if they are ſo they are not to be bribed by ſacrifices, by offerings, and by external ſervices, and that they regard the purity of the heart alone. SOCRATES thought that human errors about the will of GOD, and the duty of man, proceeded from pride more than ignorance, and therefore adviſed ALCIBIADES, of the purity of whoſe heart he had no very good opinion, "ſince he would not make uſe of the "general reſigned prayer of the Lacedæmonians, becauſe of his "pride, to wait till he had learned how to behave himſelf to-"wards the gods and towards men." He adds, "that one "who had a concern for him, and a wonderful care of him, "would be his inſtructor, and would diſpel the darkneſs of "his

" his mind, as MINERVA in HOMER takes the cloud from be-
" fore the eyes of DIOMEDE, that he might be able to diſcern
" what was good from what was evil."

WHETHER it be as difficult, as CLARKE imagined, to ſuppoſe that SOCRATES meaned himſelf, in this paſſage, I examine not. Let it be that he meaned the dæmon of ALCIBIADES. Since the maſter had an attending dæmon who diſſuaded and reſtrained him when that was neceſſary; the ſcholar might have one who would inform, and determine him whenever that ſhould be neceſſary. Nay more. Let it be as ſome learned men * have obſerved, that PLATO began to write immediately after the three laſt prophets of the Jews, as if GOD had raiſed up him to ſupply their place. Let them cite in favor of this opinion, another paſſage wherein this philoſopher ſays, " that if a perfectly juſt man ſhould appear in the world,
" he would be impriſoned, buffetted, whipped, and crucified,
" which muſt needs have been a prophecy of CHRIST, becauſe
" CHRIST was whipped and crucified; whereas SOCRATES
" only drank the poiſon by which he was condemned to die."
Let the ſame learned men take this paſſage too, in the ſecond Alcibiades, if they pleaſe, for another prophecy of the coming of CHRIST, and of a divine revelation, ſince remote events, and a diſtant time, are often ſignified by immediate events, and the preſent time, in prophetical language.

SUCH prophecies in PLATO will not be readily, nor generally admitted, I think; neither does CLARKE inſiſt that they ſhould. But it muſt be admitted, that PLATO inſinuates in many places the want, or the neceſſity, of a divine revelation to diſcover the external ſervice GOD requires, and the expiation

* DACIER.

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for ſin, to give ſtronger aſſurances of the rewards and puniſhments that await men in another world, concerning which, however, he had received particular information, by one who returned from thence on purpoſe, and to frame a ſyſtem of the whole order of things, both in this world and the next, that is, of the whole œconomy of GOD's diſpenſations to man, and of his government in heaven and on earth.

XXV.

IT was on ſome of theſe ſubjects SOCRATES had diſcourſed, when SIMMIAS ſpoke to him in the manner quoted by CLARKE. He had owned that he did not expect to attain a full knowledge of theſe things, till the ſoul was ſeparated from the body, and entirely purified in that other world, of which he gave ſo topographical a deſcription. The concluſion was, "that ſince they could not acquire a certain knowledge of the "truth here, they ſhould fix on the beſt and ſafeſt of human "reaſons, and venture on that bottom thro' the ſtorms of life, "unleſs they could get one ſtill more firm, ſuch as ſome di-"vine revelation would be, to render their paſſage leſs dan-"gerous." This now is the ſecond of the proofs brought to ſhew, "that the beſt, wiſeſt, and leaſt ſuperſtitious of the "philoſophers confeſſed their ſenſe of the want of a divine "revelation, and hoped for ſomething of that nature." The proofs are pompouſly introduced, but the whole force of them amounts to no more than this, that SOCRATES, if in truth SOCRATES did ſay all that his ſcholar makes him ſay, was much in the wrong for not adding curioſity to pride, among the cauſes of human error, concerning the will of GOD, and the duty of man; but SOCRATES himſelf had a great mind to know more than GOD has made his human creatures capable of

of knowing, and, therefore, more than he judged it neceſſary or uſeful for them to know. The imaginary want had, therefore, no other principle than metaphyſical curioſity. It could have no other. Nothing could be wanting to the divine purpoſe where God had given, tho' he had limited the means. How abſurd, how trifling is it then to bring the opinion of philoſophers concerning this want, and their hopes that it would be ſupplied, as a proof that the want was real, and that, after it had been long complained of, it was ſupplied? I paſs over another pretended proof of the ſame kind. Porphyry, whom it is impoſſible to ſee ranked among the leaſt ſuperſtitious philoſophers without ſurpriſe, found, it ſeems, that the univerſal method of delivering ſouls was not ſufficiently known by philoſophers.

In general, theſe men complained that ſenſe reached but a little way in acquiring knowledge, that the human mind was weak, that the human life was ſhort, and that the truth of things lay deep in darkneſs *. Theſe complaints related to all parts of ſcience, phyſical and metaphyſical, to natural philoſophy as well as natural theology, and I might, therefore, make the ſame uſe of them in one caſe, that Clarke makes in the other. I might bring the imperfect knowledge of corporeal nature, and the ſenſe philoſophers had of this imperfection, in proof that ſome neceſſary knowledge of this kind was wanting, and that they had reaſon to hope the defect would be ſupplied ſooner or later, ſome how or other, in a natural or in a ſupernatural way. I might beg the queſtion, like the doctor, and having aſſumed that they were ignorant of many things neceſſary to the phyſical, as he aſſumes with much leſs reaſon,

* Anguſtos ſenſus, imbecillos animos, brevia curricula vitæ, in profundo veritatem eſſe demerſam, omnia tenebris circumfuſa eſſe. . . . .

that

that they were of many things neceſſary to the moral advantages of life; I might argue, that they had reaſon to expect a time would come, when men would be rendered able to diſcover not only the ſecond, but the firſt qualities of ſubſtances, to reaſon from a general knowledge of eſſences, not from a particular knowledge of effects, and to frame by theſe and other extraordinary means a complete, regular, and conſiſtent ſcheme or ſyſtem of the whole œconomy of corporeal nature.

In this manner I might repreſent the wants, the complaints and the expectations of the heathen philoſophers. Thus I might argue, and my repreſentation and my argument would be extremely ridiculous. But are thoſe of Clarke leſs ſo? I think not. Theſe philoſophers, ſuch of them, at leaſt, whoſe works are come down to us, were very ignorant in phyſics. But in natural theology, and in morality, their knowledge was not deficient, tho' it was confined, in the former, to a very few general propoſitions. They had the ſame natural means of knowing that we have, and they knew, as well as we know, that "there is a firſt intelligent cauſe of all things, that the in-"finite wiſdom and power of this Being made, and preſerves "the univerſe, and that his providence governs it." They knew then, very fully, the relation in which they ſtood to this Being, the relation of dependent creatures and ſubjects; and this knowledge was ſufficient, or none would be ſo, to enforce the laws he had given them; for the ſame means that diſcovered the divine exiſtence, diſcovered the divine will in the whole extent of our moral obligations. We might have expected, that Clarke would have ſpecified ſome of theſe moral obligations which were unknown, or imperfectly known, to the philoſophers, after all his inſinuations concerning their ignorance. But inſtead of doing this, he inſiſts, in the very place where his ſubject required it, on ſuch obſervances, ſuch doctrines,

and ſuch ſpeculations alone as have been ſince indeed impoſed by the chriſtian revelation, but as cannot be reckoned neceſſary parts, nor, in truth, any parts of the religion of nature and of reaſon. LACTANTIUS, whom he quotes ſo often, and whoſe ſuffrage is in this caſe of more weight, becauſe his zeal for chriſtianity was ſuch, that he defended and taught it before he underſtood it, gives up the point. The philoſophers, according to him, diſcovered the whole truth, and the whole ſecret of divine religion *. No doubt they did ſo, and the natural divine religion which they diſcovered, is the foundation of the chriſtian. There is no one moral precept in the whole goſpel, as I have hinted already, which was not taught by heathen philoſophers. Even thoſe refinements upon virtue, to which our divines are willing to ſuppoſe, that mere humanity could not reach, were taught by ſome heathen ſages, and practiſed by ſome heathen ſaints, as well before as after the coming of CHRIST. Before this time, their religion, that I mean of ſome of the philoſophers, was much more ſpiritual than that of the Jews. After this time, it vied for ſpirituality, for myſtery, and for ſupernatural effects with the Chriſtian. To be humble, to renounce the pomps and vanities of the world, to mortify the fleſh, to be patient under afflictions, to forgive injuries, to return good for evil, were particular doctrines of paganiſm, as univerſal charity or benevolence was the broad foundation of their moral ſyſtem. This matter is ſtrongly and largely exemplified in the third book of the "al-" "netanæ quæſtiones;" for it ſerved biſhop HUET's argument in that place to ſhew, what it ſerved Dr. CLARKE's argument in his Evidences to conceal.

* Totam igitur veritatem, et omne divinæ religionis arcanum philoſophi attigerunt. L. 7.

How

How trifling is it, after this, to inſiſt on the diſputes of a theological kind; for of a moral kind there were, properly ſpeaking, none that aroſe among the philoſophers? They were diſputes about words, or about ſome very inſignificant ſpeculations, and no more; for the morality of ZENO, and of EPICURUS, reduced to practice, was the ſame. But to proceed; how ſtrongly might this objection be retorted on the fathers of the chriſtian church? To object that the heathen had no one complete ſcheme wherein all the moral duties were collected together, inſtead of being taught occaſionally, is ridiculous, ſince the ſame objection might be made, if it was one, to chriſtianity likewiſe. But the divines who object this, mean ſomething more. When they ſay that the philoſophers were unable to comprehend the truth of religion, tho' they diſcovered and explained almoſt all the particulars wherein it conſiſts *, they mean by the entire ſcheme they refer to, the ſummary of their own theology, wherein the fall and the redemption of man, and all the myſteries of chriſtianity are contained. This they call the whole doctrine, and deſign of true religion from the original to the conſummation of all things, and of this indeed the heathen philoſophers might well be ignorant, ſince no man could know it who was not taught by St. PAUL, or by ſome chriſtian doctor †.

THUS their ignorance of true religion is accounted for not a little hypothetically. But even thus their complaints are not juſtified, nor the expectations imputed to them rendered reaſonable. They muſt needs be ignorant of true religion, if natu-

* .... Quamvis ea fere, quibus ſumma ipſa conſtat, et viderint, et explicaverint. LACT. L. 7.

† Verum autem non niſi ejus ſcire eſt, qui ſit doctus a Deo. Ib.

ral religion was a part of it only, even at that time, as it is at this. They could not know a revealed religion, nor any real want of it before the revelation was made, and the knowledge they had was such as the Author of nature had thought sufficient, since he had given them no more. Their complaints and their expectations, therefore, were founded in proud curiosity, and vain presumption. The use which CLARKE makes of them is something worse. To approve them, and to deduce from the supposed reasonableness of them the necessity of a further revelation, is to weigh his own opinion, and theirs, against providence. It is to say, that they saw before, and that he has seen since this further revelation was made, the necessity of it to reform mankind effectually, by opening to them the whole doctrine and design of true religion, which were opened in part only to the heathen world; and that the event has justified the complaints, and the expectation. This latter has been a topic of much theological triumph. Bring me a man, says LACTANTIUS *, who is choleric, who is given to rail, who is unruly and fierce, with a few words of GOD I will render him as tame as a sheep. Bring me one who is given up to his lust, and so he goes on. "Numquis hæc "philosophorum aut unquam præstitit, aut, præstare si velit, "potest?" Did any one of the philosophers do so much, or could he, if he would? "It was hard, says St. AUSTIN, where he mentions the letter of PORPHYRY to ANEBO, "it was "hard for so great a philosopher to discover, to expose, and "boldly to convict the whole diabolical society, which every "little old christian woman discovers at once, and detests "openly. Quam quælibet anicula christiana nec nosse cunc-"tatur, et liberrimè detestatur." Thus the triumph of the gospel over ignorance and immorality, and the reformation

* Vid. the quotation in the Evid.

of

of the world, by the publication of it, are frequently magnified. But when we conſider the means of reforming mankind, which the heathen philoſophers, and the chriſtian divines, have had in their turns, and compare the progreſs made in this great work by both, it will appear that the former had not ſufficient means, (ſo far their complaints were well founded) nor the latter a ſucceſs proportionable to the means they had. In ſhort, if CLARKE's way of reaſoning be good, ſome extraordinary and ſupernatural aſſiſtance to reform the world, is ſtill wanting; for it would be impious to ſay, that a further revelation is juſt as neceſſary now as it was before the coming of CHRIST.

XXVI.

TO ſpeak of the want of ſufficient means to propagate natural religion, diſtinctly from the want of a ſufficient knowledge of it, which are often purpoſely confounded together, that the firſt which is true, may cover the laſt which is falſe, muſt be our next taſk.

THERE was no creed, nor any act of uniformity impoſed on the heathen philoſophers. But ſtill it is not true, that the ſyſtem of moral obligations, or natural religion, was to them a wide ſea wherein they wandered without knowing their way, or having any guide. It is not true, that they were unable to make out upon what principles originally, and for what end ultimately, the choice of virtue was to be made *. They had better guides than CLARKE, whom it was in their power to follow, nature and reaſon; one pointed out their way with a

* Vid. Evid. p. 176. 191.

ſteady hand, and the other was ſufficient to lead them in it, the very purpoſe for which it was given. The original principles of this choice were ſtrongly laid in the conſtitution of things, and theſe philoſophers muſt have been ſtupid, as well as blind, if they had not felt, as well as ſeen, that the ultimate end of this choice was the happineſs of mankind. They felt it, they ſaw it, they proved it to others. Virtue was not only recommended as wiſe, and reaſonable, and fit to be choſen, but ſurely it was eſtabliſhed by them to be of plain neceſſity, and indiſpenſable obligation; ſince it was taught to be the perfection of our nature, as well as the poſitive will of GOD, and ſince the greateſt part of them did their utmoſt to eſtabliſh a belief of rewards and puniſhments in a future life, that they might allure to virtue, and deter from vice, the more effectually. But the generality of mankind continued in their evil habits, notwithſtanding all theſe doctrines, and all the inſtitutions contrived to enforce them. What promiſed to be effectual in ſpeculation, proved ineffectual in practice. Vice was checked, but virtue did not prevail. The conqueſt was never complete.

SHALL we ſay that the reaſon of this was becauſe the miſſionaries of natural religion, who ſet themſelves in earneſt about this excellent work, were few *? But this reaſon will not hold, for how few ſoever they might be in general, they were numerous enough at particular times, in particular places, and yet even then and there we do not find, that they made any proportionable progreſs, altho' they could not fail to do ſome good by their exhortations, inſtructions, and examples. SOCRATES, his ſcholars, and all the great men whom the academy produced, may be reckoned a number of miſſionaries

* Evid. p. 173.

ſufficient

ſufficient to preach the duties of natural religion, with full effect in ſuch a city as Athens. SOCRATES ſet himſelf in good earneſt, ſurely, about this excellent work. He went from ſtreet to ſtreet, and from one public place to another, as the apoſtles did ſome centuries afterwards in their diſperſions. If he preached with the ſame ſimplicity, he preached with the ſame zeal. If he had not all the gifts of the ſpirit, he had ſome of them, no doubt; for tho' he could not work miracles to prove the divinity of his miſſion, he died to prove the truth of his doctrine. What was the effect of all this? He made a great, he could not make a good, man of his favorite diſciple ALCIBIADES; and tho' he rendered, or contributed to render, the ſchools of philoſophy nurſeries of religion, as well as of learning, which were always open, and always crowded, yet how ſmall a progreſs was made in the Athenian commonwealth towards the reformation of mankind? Miſſionaries were not wanting in this inſtance, and a greater number would not have had a greater effect.

SHALL we ſay that the reaſon of this was, becauſe many of the philoſophers were ſo vicious themſelves, that they contradicted their precepts by their examples, "ut cum eorum "vitâ mirabiliter pugnet oratio?" This reaſon will not hold neither, and I might be ſurpriſed at CLARKE, for bringing it, if I did not conſider him, like other polemical writers, accuſtomed to vend his arguments by tale rather than by weight, and ready to employ ſuch as have a ſpecious appearance, how weak ſoever they really are, in hopes that ſome of his readers may be caught by them. TULLY boaſts in his ſecond Tuſculan, as he does in all his writings, the wonderful effects of philoſophy, and thoſe which he mentions, are ſuch as natural theology and moral philoſophy can alone produce, "medetur animis, inanes "ſolicitudines detrahit, cupiditatibus liberat, pellit timores."

7. But

But philoſophy cannot produce theſe, he ſays*, in all men alike, nor be of any great efficacy unleſs ſhe works on a ſuitable and proper nature; for which reaſon philoſophers themſelves, they who have taught, diſputed, and writ on all theſe ſubjects, have been ſeldom influenced by them. Scarce here and there one is to be found who lives up to his own doctrines and rules of life. TULLY purſues his invective againſt the levity, vanity, inconſiſtency, avarice, and other vices of theſe men; and CLARKE imagined that this ſketch of their characters would furniſh an excellent reaſon the more, whereby to account for the little progreſs they made in reforming the world. But he ſhould have been reſtrained from inſiſting on this argument, both by the reaſon of the thing, and by a regard to the order of which he was. If the vices of many, among thoſe who were miſſionaries of morality in the heathen world, diſappointed the common endeavors of all; how came it to paſs, that chriſtianity made ſo great a progreſs afterwards? How can the clergy of your church, or of ours, pretend that they contribute now, or ever did contribute, to the reformation of mankind? No age, whereof we have any certain anecdotes, can be pointed out, wherein all the vices that TULLY imputes to moſt of the heathen philoſophers, did not prevail among moſt of the chriſtian divines, with great circumſtances of aggravation. They have had not only all the vices incident to human nature in common with other men, but they have had the particular vices of their order, for ſuch there are, and ſuch I ſhall have occaſion to ſhew that there are. Read the entire paſſage, conſult your memory, look round you, and then you ſhall tell me what you think of CLARKE's argument. You ſhall tell it in my ear. I expect no more; for I know

* Non idem poteſt apud omnes. Tum valet multum cum eſt idoneam complexa naturam.

how

how desirous you are to keep fair with orders, whatever liberties you take with particular men. For my own part, who have not the same discretion, I will say boldly that the clergy both of your church and of mine are, in general, the most negligent of missionaries, and fitter much to hinder by their example, than to promote by their doctrine, the advancement of religion, natural or revealed.

Shall we say that the sublime doctrines, and abstract arguments of Plato, and other philosophers, were by no means fitted for the bulk and common sort of mankind? Or shall we fix the reason of the little progress they made, in their ignorance of the whole scheme, order, and state of things? Should we do both like the author of the Evidences, we should, like him, contradict ourselves; because, if the doctrines of Plato, for instance, were too sublime, and his arguments too abstract, they must have been much more so had he known, and gone about to explain all that is called the whole scheme, order, and state of things. It is marvellous to consider, how many of the most refined precepts of christian morality were taught by him, several centuries before Christ and his apostles taught them. Such were those about imitating God, and others that have been mentioned above. It is still more marvellous to consider, that some of the most profound mysteries of christianity were taught by this philosopher, several centuries before they were revealed. Such was the doctrine of the Trinity, in explaining which if he advanced some errors, he did no more than many christian divines have done from the most early ages of the church, no more than we are bound to believe that Whiston and Clarke himself have done, unless we renounce that orthodox profession of faith which all the fathers of the church have held, from those of the Nicæan council down to Dr. Waterland, and my good uncle the earl of

NOTTINGHAM. How this may be accounted for, I do not presume to determine, tho' I have somewhere or other presumed to guess. But this we may affirm *, that if PLATO had known the method of GOD's governing the world, his design in creating mankind, the original dignity of human nature, the ground and circumstances of men's present corrupt condition, the manner of the divine interposition, necessary to their recovery, and the glorious end to which GOD intended finally to conduct them, as well as he knew the system of a Trinity, of a future judgment, of an heaven, an hell, and a purgatory; he who is so often unintelligible now, would have been vastly more so. He would have been, therefore, less fitted than he was for the bulk and common sort of mankind, and for the great work of reformation.

SHALL we say, finally, that the heathen philosophers were unequal to this great work, because their doctrines were not enforced by a divine authority? Even this reason will prove nothing; for the philosophers and lawgivers did enforce their doctrines and laws by a divine authority, and call an higher principle to the assistance of philosophy, and bare reason. ZOROASTER, HOSTANES, the magi, the prophets and seers of Egypt, MINOS, PYTHAGORAS, NUMA, in short, all the fathers of heathen theology, all those who founded or reformed religions and commonwealths, made these pretensions, and their pretensions were admitted. They were impostors, but they passed in vulgar opinion for persons divinely inspired and commissioned. Some good they did, but little that was permanent, not because they wanted the opinion of a divine authority for them, but because they employed it absurdly, or because even this opinion was not sufficient.

* Evid. p. 176.

To

To what now are we reduced? Since the precepts and motives, offered by the beſt philoſophers, have been never able to reform mankind effectually *, without the aſſiſtance of ſome higher principle, and ſome divine authority, nor even when both of theſe have been aſſumed, may we not be led to think, that ſuch a reformation is impracticable? May we not conclude, from the experience of all ages, that no means can bring it about, and thoſe which have been employed leſs than any? There is a perpetual conflict in the breaſt of every man, who endeavors to reſtrain his appetites, to govern his paſſions, and to make reaſon, as TULLY expreſſes it, the law of his life †. Juſt ſuch a conflict there is between virtue and vice, in the great commonwealth of mankind. If the conflict was not maintained by religious and civil inſtitutions, the human ſtate would be intolerable; and tho' it be maintained, as the ſucceſs is various, the ſtate is very imperfect. The method taken to fix this ſucceſs on the right ſide, by calling in artificial theology, has contributed more to ſubdue reaſon than vice and immorality. Reaſon has been laid aſide, natural religion has been no longer ſolely, nor ſo much as directly, concerned in the conteſt. Authority has uſurped the place of one, ſuperſtition of the other; and theſe two have been oppoſed almoſt alone to the torrent of human paſſions, and to the diſorders of mankind in all the countries of the world; ſo that, wherever philoſophy and reaſon could lift up their heads, they have had the remedy to combat as well as the diſeaſe.

* Evid. p. 198. † Tuſc. Quæſt. ib.

XXVII.

THERE is a country, into the antiquities of which we look further back than into thoſe of any other, and where we may find examples to confirm and illuſtrate what is here ſaid, by comparing the effects of natural religion, unmixed and uncorrupted, with thoſe of artificial theology and ſuperſtition. The country, I mean, is China, whoſe traditions and hiſtories deſerve, at leaſt, as much credit as thoſe of antient nations that have been known to us longer, and which our ſcholars quote with ſo much aſſurance. Now natural religion ſeems to have been preſerved more pure and unmixed in this country than in any other, and for a longer time from that when it was firſt inhabited, and government was firſt eſtabliſhed in it *. The antient Chineſe held it unlawful to diſpute about the divine nature, about the attributes of GOD, the exerciſe of his power, or the conduct of his providence; and it ſeems very plain that the conciſe manner in which their ſages expreſſed themſelves, whenever they ſpoke of the Supreme Being, and upon which their refining ſucceſſors have endeavoured to found, in part at leaſt, their atheiſm, proceeded from this modeſt, this reaſonable, and this pious principle. They obſerved the order of nature, and from thence they deduced all the rules of private morality and public policy. To compare his conduct with the law of heaven and earth †, is the character of a perfect prince, in the works of CONFUCIUS. That reaſon ſhould preſide over paſſion, was the great rule of life, and to walk according to it, was to walk in the great high way of life ‖. Thus they were led by ſimple and plain rea-

* Scient. Sinica.
† Confert res à ſe geſtas cum cœli terræque lege.
‖ Orbis univerſalis regula, regia humani generis via.

ſonings,

ſonings, from the works to the will of GOD, and to three kinds of moral obligations, to thoſe of an individual, of the member of a family, and of the member of a political ſociety. Bare reaſon enforced ſo well the practice of natural religion, by the laws and conſtitutions of this empire, and the duties of it became ſo habitual by education and cuſtom, that this people enjoyed under their two firſt imperial families, which continued eleven hundred years, all the bleſſings of public and private virtue that humanity is capable of enjoying. So we muſt underſtand the deſcriptions of this golden age; for tho' the Chineſe lived in a ſtate of innocence and ſimplicity whilſt it laſted, yet as they were ſubject, like other nations, to phyſical evils, ſo may we aſſure ourſelves that they were neither infallible nor impeccable, nor therefore entirely exempt from moral evil. It is enough for the honor of reaſon, and of natural religion, that theſe principles, enforced by civil authority, appear in this inſtance to have anſwered the purpoſes of true religion much better by themſelves, than theſe purpoſes have been ever anſwered by all the expedients, and all the adventitious helps, that philoſophers, legiſlators, and prieſts have deviſed.

WHETHER any other nation afforded an example of the ſame kind, we know not. But this we know, that when other nations begin to appear, they appear already under the influence of abſurd theology and groſs ſuperſtition, and that the Chineſe began in the ſame remote antiquity to fall into the ſame errors, and all the conſequences of them. Under their third imperial family, the affectation of imagining and unfolding myſteries, and of explaining the firſt principle of all things, grew into faſhion amongſt them, and the table of FOHI, or the book Yekim, which is nothing more than a draught of ſixty-four figures, compoſed of three hundred and eighty-

four lines, ſome broken, and ſome entire, furniſhed to the ſtudious labors of VENVAM and CHEUCUM, and other commentators, as much ſublime knowledge as ever the firſt chapter of Geneſis furniſhed to a profound cabaliſt or whimſical divine. From the various changes, and different combinations of theſe lines, they proceeded, as PYTHAGORAS did from numbers, and PLATO from immaterial forms and incorporeal eſſences, to erect ſyſtems of natural and moral philoſophy. When they had once departed from ſimplicity and truth, in the ſearch of myſtery, they ſoon imagined themſelves capable of attaining unattainable knowledge; the moſt chimerical paſt for real, and they boaſted of nothing leſs than to explain the whole ſcheme, order, and ſtate of things. Thus reaſon was abuſed by pretended ſcience, and natural religion was deformed by metaphyſical ſpeculations, and ſuperſtitious devotions.

LI LAO KIUM was a philoſopher of the ſame age with CONFUCIUS, and both of them of the ſame with PYTHAGORAS. Whether the Chineſe and the Samian had the ſame maſters, I know not. But if they had, theſe maſters were rather indian gymnoſophiſts than hebrew prophets. Several circumſtances incline to think ſo. The dogma, particularly, in the Taoſu, where it is ſaid that the firſt reaſon produced one, one two, two three, and three all things, is a jargon very like to that of PYTHAGORAS which DIOGENES LAERTIUS has preſerved, which he and LI LAO KIUM might have learned in India, but which there is no pretence to ſuſpect that the latter could have learned in Paleſtine. The Chineſe taught the ſame moral philoſophy that had been always taught in China, but he took advantage of the metaphyſical folly which prevailed at that time, and which even CONFUCIUS had countenanced, to broach a new and a moſt extravagant theology. He founded

it, perhaps, on ſome interpretations of the book Yekim; but however he founded it, he eſtabliſhed it with ſo much ſucceſs that he himſelf was worſhipped at laſt: temples and ſtatues were erected to many of his ſect, all that impoſture could impoſe on credulity was impoſed, natural theology was abominably corrupted, and a ridiculous external ſervice took the place, in great meaſure, of real virtue and true devotion.

THIS ſect prepared the way for another, which had prevailed in India near a thouſand years before our chriſtian æra, but was not introduced into China till ſixty-five years after it. This ſect was that of FOË, who raiſed a ſpiritual empire in the Eaſt, that has equalled, if not exceeded, all others, under different forms and appellations, in extent and duration. FOË lived in a deſert, under the care of four jogues, or gymnoſophiſts, till he was thirty years old. Then he appeared in the world, aſſumed divinity, and declared himſelf to be the ſaviour of men, for whoſe ſakes he had condeſcended to be born, that he might recover them from their errors, expiate their ſins, and lead them into the way of being happy hereafter; for he threatened future puniſhments to thoſe who did not believe in him, nor ſubmit to his doctrines. Voluminous legends of miracles wrought at his birth, and in the courſe of his life, were publiſhed by ten of his diſciples. Well might they be voluminous, ſince his pretended miſſion laſted nine and forty years, and we may aſſure ourſelves that atteſtations of them were not wanting, ſince the number of proſelytes he made in that time was immenſe. They were divided in different claſſes. To believe implicitly, and to obſerve the rules of morality were required from all, and the leaſt credible auſterities were practiſed by ſome, as they continue to be at this day.

BOTH

Both theſe religions are ſtill ſubſiſting in China. What has been the effect of them? The antient laws and cuſtoms of the empire are inviolably kept, and good government is maintained by them, independently of theſe. But are the Chineſe grown better men? No. They build monaſteries for bonzes, they endow them richly, they adorn their pagods or temples, they proſtrate themſelves, they pray, they make their offerings, and they burn gilded paper in them, after which they rob or cheat without ſcruple, and indulge themſelves in practices which natural religion abhors the moſt. There is ſomething worſe than this. The true principles of religion being removed, and theſe phantaſtic principles placed in lieu of them, the foundation of all religion is ſapped at once. They who cannot perſuade themſelves that the religion they ſee practiſed is a ſervice fit to be paid to a Supreme Being, nor conſequently required by any ſuch being, ſlide eaſily from the belief that there is no religion, to the belief that there is no God. This happened in China, where the literati, or learned men, are in truth a ſect of atheiſts, and theiſm ſeems to be the portion of the vulgar alone. Such has been, and is at this day the effect of artificial theology, and ſuperſtitious devotion in that country. The jeſuits, from whoſe relations, as from the beſt authority in this caſe, I have taken what I have ſaid on the ſubject, pretend that Foë, or Xaca himſelf, gave occaſion to the atheiſm that has been ſince eſtabliſhed, by declaring, before his death, to ſome of his diſciples, his inward doctrine, which tranſpired afterwards. He confeſſed, they ſay, that he had concealed the truth under the veil of types, of metaphors, and parables; that vacuity and inanition were the firſt principles of all things, beyond which nothing was to be ſought, becauſe nothing was to be found. What is meaned by the terms that the jeſuits tranſlate "va-

"cuum

"cuum et inane", I know not, nor is it worth our while to gueſs. Thus much is plain, the conſequence of refining in matters of religion, beyond the obvious dictates of nature and reaſon, has been ſuperſtition, and enthuſiaſm, or atheiſm, not reformation of manners in China.

XXVIII.

IF we return now to thoſe countries, with which we are better acquainted, we ſhall find in them much the ſame courſe of things. We ſhall find, indeed, natural religion no where eſtabliſhed in it's full extent and purity, as it ſeems to have been once in China. Some firſt principles of it were known and practiſed by people the leaſt civiliſed, as JUSTIN * repreſents them to have been by the Scythians. No people were wholly ignorant of them, no ſort of government could ſubſiſt without them. But then, as their light ſhone dimly, among theſe half ſavages, thro' the clouds of a ſuperſtition I ſome where called natural, and not improperly, we ſhall find this light actually obſcured, and put out, in great part, among the moſt civiliſed and learned nations. Inſtead of diſpelling theſe clouds, and improving natural religion, they had increaſed by fantaſtic knowledge what ignorance had begun, and we trace the ſame ill conſequences of pretended revelations, and artificial theology, on this ſide the Ganges, as we have traced, on the other, the abominable conſequences which have followed eſtabliſhments made on the ruins of natural religion.

IT is true that the heathen philoſophers were unable to propagate natural religion, and to reform the manners of

* L. 2. C. 2.

men effectually. But it is not true that they were so for the reasons CLARKE gives, which have been shewn, I think, to be futile and insufficient. They were so for another reason principally, which has been touched, and requires to be more fully developed. The reason is, that they proceeded, in the doctor's own method, to lay the first principles of all religion, and to reason from them.

THE doctor, whom I cite so often, because his book is the last I have read on this subject, and has been received with the greatest applause, repeats over and over, and very dogmatically, such maxims as these, "that goodness, and justice, and all "the moral attributes are the same in GOD, as they are in "our ideas; that the relations, respects, and proportions of "things are just such as they appear to be to our understand-"ings; that from hence there results a rule, which is the nature "and reason of things; that this rule is common to GOD and "man; that it is the law of all his actions, in the government "of the world; and that, as it always determines his will, "it should always determine ours." From this assumed knowledge of the divine attributes, and of the abstract nature and reason of things, the most extravagant opinions concerning the will of GOD, and the most audacious judgments on the conduct and dispensations of his providence, have been deduced. How should it be otherwise? They who reason "à posteriori" from the constitution of the human system, and from the works of GOD, have indeed a rule to go by, precise, invariable, certain. But they who reason "à priori" from the moral attributes of GOD, and from the abstract nature and reason of things, have no such rule. Theists will concur in ascribing all possible perfections to the Supreme Being, but they will always differ when they descend into any detail, and presume to be particular about them, as they al-

ways have differed in their notions of theſe perfections, and conſequently in the application of them. I have ſaid, I believe, already, and I ſhall not recal what is ſaid, agreeably to univerſal and conſtant experience, that the eternal reaſon of things, founded in the conſideration of their abſtract nature, is, for the moſt part, as we ſee it employed by believers and infidels, by the orthodox and the heterodox, nothing better than the reaſon of party, of prejudice, of ſyſtem, and of profeſſion. Yet this is the method which ſome men preſcribe, and which CLARKE * declares to be, of all others, the beſt and cleareſt, the certaineſt and moſt univerſal that the light of nature affords to diſcover the will of GOD in matters of morality, and to account for the diſpenſations and conduct of his providence. This author goes even further, and the other method is ſtyled by him †, a collateral conſideration which may come in aid of the former, nothing more. This other method, however, extends as far as human wants require, and human knowledge can reach. Where it does not extend, the want is imaginary, and the knowledge fantaſtic; and if philoſophers and divines had aimed at eſtabliſhing the belief of a Supreme Being, and the duties of natural religion alone, they might, and they would have been contented with it.

BUT they meaned ſomething more. They aimed at ſuperiority and fame, at power and riches. He who had never preſumed to define the moral attributes of an all-perfect Being, who contented himſelf to know that ſuch a being exiſted by the neceſſity of his nature, and that his wiſdom and power are infinite; he who had never troubled himſelf about eternal reſpects, relations, and proportions of things, and collected the will, as he collected the exiſtence of this Being

* Evid. p. 119. † ib.

" à posteriori;" he, I say, knew as much of GOD, and of his duty to GOD and man, as natural religion required that he should know. But it was for the interest of philosophers and priests, that men should think there was much more to be known; and if those of Egypt had taught nothing more than natural theology, instead of theurgic magic, nothing more than the plain duties of religion, instead of mysterious rites; it is highly probable the MERCURIES would not have been honored, as they were, in all succeeding ages, nor the clergy have possessed a third part of the whole revenue of the kingdom.

SUCH as have been mentioned were the principles on which artificial theology arose among the heathens, and as the principles were laid neither in reason nor truth, which are always one, it is no wonder that this theology became as various as error could make it. Some of the motives to invent and embrace it, were such likewise as have been mentioned. I say, some; because we may well conceive that when principles, not only false, but vague like these, had been once adopted by the delirium of metaphysics, the enthusiasm of superstition, or the prejudices of ignorance, the men who had been accustomed to reason upon them, and to take for true everything that use had made familiar, might run into the greatest absurdities, sometimes without having any bad motive, nay with a pious intention of promoting true religion, and of attaching men to it, by a greater authority, and by greater hopes and fears. This might be the case of many, as we shall easily believe, if we consider what has passed in later days. But however it was brought about, art took every-where the place of nature, and faith of reason. Artificial theology spread far and wide; philosophers taught it; lawgivers established it; priests improved it: here it was employed to enforce, there it

it was ſubſtituted to natural religion: the main principles of it, and even particular opinions, and local inſtitutions have been variouſly mingled in different ſyſtems, and are to be diſcerned in them even now. This has happened naturally, and almoſt neceſſarily. All theſe ſyſtems lean on certain primitive notions, which the human mind is ſo prone to frame or to receive. The ſame affections and paſſions maintain them, work upon them, and direct them in different imaginations. The matter is the ſame, the form alone is changed.

XXIX.

AMONG many doctrines that were taught by thoſe who pretended to explain the whole ſcheme, and order of divine œconomy with reſpect to man, that of rewards and puniſhments in a future ſtate was one. It began to be taught long before we have any light into antiquity, and when we begin to have any, we find it eſtabliſhed. How powerful is the deſire of continuing to exiſt? How predominant is the pride of the human heart? Nothing ſeems more natural to man, than to wiſh to live without reſtraint or fear, and yet how ready was the multitude, in the pagan world, to embrace the hope of immortality, tho' it was accompanied with the fear of damnation? Like the elementary people of the cabaliſts *, one may think, they would have choſen to be damned eternally, rather than to ceaſe to exiſt. But every one was flattered by a ſyſtem that raiſed him, in imagination, above corporeal nature, as every one was at liberty to flatter himſelf further, that he ſhould paſs this immortality in the fellowſhip of the gods, "in contubernio deorum."

* Vid. Borri's Letters.

THE hypotheſis of a life after this, eſpecially when it was accompanied by that of a life preceding this, which was founded on a ſuppoſed metempſychoſis that ſeveral ſyſtems of religion admitted, ſerved two purpoſes. It furniſhed an anſwer to the accuſation which atheiſts brought, and which theiſts were too ready to admit in thoſe days, as well as in ours, of unjuſt diſpenſations of providence, in the diſtribution of good and evil. This purpoſe ſeems very unneceſſary to me, who am firmly perſuaded that the accuſation is a mere ſophiſm, and void of any foundation. But the other purpoſe was, no doubt, very neceſſary, ſince the belief of future rewards and puniſhments could not fail to have ſome effect on the manners of men, to encourage virtue, and to reſtrain vice. For this purpoſe the doctrine was ſtrongly inculcated from time immemorial. Egypt was the great miſtreſs of religion, as well as of arts and ſciences, and the doctrines and rites of her church were diſperſed wherever ſhe ſent her colonies; theſe of the "mythologia de inferis" among the reſt. Whatever MELAMPUS, CADMUS, and others, carried into Greece, ORPHEUS carried theſe. He propagated them by his verſes and his inſtitutions. But it was your HOMER who ſpread them moſt, and gave them the greateſt vogue by his Odyſſey and Iliad, thoſe ſtupendous works, which VIRGIL alone could imitate, and you tranſlate, with ſucceſs.

ONE cannot ſee, without ſurpriſe, a doctrine ſo uſeful to all religions, and therefore incorporated into all the ſyſtems of paganiſm, left wholly out of that of the Jews. Many probable reaſons might be brought to ſhew that it was an Egyptian doctrine before the Exode, and this particularly, that it was propagated from Egypt ſo ſoon at leaſt afterwards, by all thoſe who were inſtructed, like MOSES, in the wiſdom of that people.

He

He transported much of this wisdom into the scheme of religion and government, which he gave the Israelites; and among other things certain rites, which may seem to allude or have a remote relation to this very doctrine. Tho' this doctrine, therefore, had not been that of ABRAHAM, ISAAC, and JACOB, he might have adopted it with as little scruple, as he did many customs and institutions purely Egyptian. He had to do with a rebellious, but a superstitious people. In the first character, they made it necessary that he should neglect nothing which might add weight to his ordinances, and contribute to keep them in awe. In the second, their dipositions was extremely proper to receive such a doctrine, and to be influenced by it. Shall we say, that an hypothesis of future rewards and punishments was useless among a people who lived under a theocracy, and that the future judge of other people was their immediate judge and king, who resided in the midst of them, and who dealed out rewards and punishments on every occasion? Why then were so many precautions taken? Why was a solemn covenant made with GOD, as with a temporal prince? Why were so many promises and threatenings of rewards and punishments, temporal indeed, but future and contingent, as we find in the book of Deuteronomy, most pathetically held out by MOSES? Would there have been any more impropriety in holding out those of one kind, than those of another, because the Supreme Being, who disposed and ordered both, was in a particular manner present among them? Would an addition of rewards and punishments more remote, but eternal, and in all respects far greater, to the catalogue, have had no effect? I think neither of these things can be said.

WHAT shall we say then? How came it to pass this addition was not made? I will mention what occurs to me, and shall

ſhall not be over ſolicitous about the weight that my reflection may deſerve. If the doctrines of the immortality of the ſoul, and of a future ſtate, had been revealed to MOSES, that he might teach them to the Iſraelites, he would have taught them moſt certainly. But he did not teach them. They were, therefore, not revealed to him. Why they were not ſo revealed, ſome pert divine, or other, will be ready to tell you. For me, I dare not preſume to gueſs. But this I may preſume to advance, that ſince theſe doctrines were not revealed by GOD, to his ſervant MOSES, it is highly probable, that this legiſlator made a ſcruple of teaching them to the Iſraelites, howſoever well inſtructed he might be in them himſelf, and howſoever uſeful to government he might think them. The ſuperſtitious and idolatrous rites of the Egyptians, like thoſe of other nations, were founded on the polytheiſm and the mythology that prevailed, and were ſuffered to prevail among the vulgar, and that made the ſum of their religion. It ſeemed to be a point of policy to direct all theſe abſurd opinions and practices to the ſervice of government, inſtead of attempting to root them out. But then the great difference between rude and ignorant nations, and ſuch as were civiliſed and learned like the Egyptians, ſeems to have been this, that the former had no other ſyſtem of religion than theſe abſurd opinions and practices, whereas the latter had an inward, as well as an outward, doctrine. There is reaſon to believe, that natural theology and natural religion had been taught and practiſed in the antient theban dynaſty; and it is probable, that they continued to be an inward doctrine in the reſt of Egypt, whilſt polytheiſm, idolatry, and all the myſteries, all the impieties, and all the follies of magic, were the outward doctrine. MOSES might be let into a knowledge of both, and under the patronage of the princeſs, whoſe foundling he was, he might be initiated into thoſe myſteries, where

where the ſecret doctrine alone was taught, and the outward was exploded. But we cannot imagine, that the children of Iſrael, in general, enjoyed the ſame privilege, nor that the maſters were ſo laviſh to their ſlaves of a favor ſo diſtinguiſhed, and often ſo hard to obtain. No. The children of Iſrael knew nothing more than the outſide of the religion of Egypt, and if the doctrine we ſpeak of was known to them, it was known only in the ſuperſtitious rites, and with all the fabulous circumſtances in which it was dreſſed up and preſented to vulgar belief. It would have been hard, therefore, to teach, or to renew this doctrine in the minds of the Iſraelites, without giving them an occaſion the more to recal the polytheiſtical fables, and practice the idolatrous rites they had learned during their captivity. Rites and ceremonies are often ſo equivocal, that they may be applied to very different doctrines. But when they are ſo cloſely connected with one doctrine, that they are not applicable to another, to teach the doctrine is, in ſome ſort, to teach the rites and ceremonies, and to authoriſe the fables on which they are founded. MOSES, therefore, being at liberty to teach this doctrine of rewards and puniſhments in a future ſtate, or not to teach it, might very well chooſe the latter; tho' he indulged the Iſraelites on account of the hardneſs of their hearts, and by the divine permiſſion, as it is preſumed, in ſeveral obſervances and cuſtoms which did not lead directly, tho' even they did ſo, perhaps, in conſequence, to the polytheiſm and idolatry of Egypt. But I return to Greece.

XXX.

THE ſeeds of artificial theology and ſuperſtitious devotion, for they go always together, which ORPHEUS and other Egyptian miſſionaries had ſowed, were cultivated

by theiſtical philoſophers, and the doctrine of a future ſa particularly. If PYTHAGORAS reported, that the ſoul of HESIOD was tied to a brazen column, and the ſoul of HOMER hung upon a tree, for their temerity in aſcribing human paſſions, and the rules of human conduct even to the father of gods and men, as ſome traditions ſay, one would be tempted to think, that he applied this doctrine of a future ſtate to enforce natural religion alone. But we ſhould deceive ourſelves greatly if we thought ſo. We have none of his writings, if he did write. But we know from DIOGENES LAËRTIUS, from PORPHYRY, from JAMBLICHUS, and from other authorities, that he imported from Egypt and the eaſtern nations an immenſe ſtock of the theology and ſuperſtition which were in vogue amongſt them. If inſpiration was not the leaſt, it was not the greateſt of his pretenſions. He inveloped his doctrines in myſtery to make them paſs for divine, laid the foundations of them out of the ken of human reaſon, and acquired a great reputation in metaphyſics and divine philoſophy, by the uſual method, by not being underſtood.

I paſs to SOCRATES and PLATO. The firſt devoted himſelf to the reformation of his countrymen with unexampled zeal, and as St. PAUL was the apoſtle of the gentiles in revealed, we may ſay that SOCRATES was the ſame in natural religion. There was greater ſimplicity, and leſs heat of imagination, in the maſter than in the ſcholar. Sober proſe was the language of one. A poetical enthuſiaſm was that of the other. One was fitter to reform his own age by his diſcourſes, the other to create the admiration of poſterity by his writings. Good ſenſe and truth ſerved the purpoſe of one much leſs than wit and beauty of ſtyle ſerved the purpoſe of the other. The very extravagancies of PLATO, for which he deſerved at leaſt as much as HOMER to be baniſhed out of his

own Utopia, recommended him to after ages; and there have been many, as there are ſtill ſome, who would ſay, like TULLY in one of his rants, "errare meherculè malo cum "PLATONE, quam cum iſtis vera ſentire." But notwithſtanding the difference I make, and which is true, in general, between theſe philoſophers, notwithſtanding the accuſation which XENOPHON, who took minutes of the diſcourſes of SOCRATES, laid againſt PLATO for corrupting the doctrine of their common maſter, it is certain, and XENOPHON himſelf might be brought to prove, that if SOCRATES did not ſay every thing which PLATO made him ſay, yet he loſt himſelf ſometimes in clouds of metaphyſics, as much as he was afraid to do in thoſe of phyſics, from whence he has been ſo much applauded for bringing philoſophy down to the affairs of human life, to things of real uſe, and to knowledge within our reach. How could it be otherwiſe? SOCRATES was a great reaſoner "à priori" as well as PLATO, even in the eſtabliſhment of natural religion. To contemplate God, or the eternal ideas which exiſt in God, and to abſtract the ſoul from corporeal ſenſe were ſoon made, by the encouragement which this ſchool, the ſenate of philoſophy, gave to ſuch theology, the two great objects of it; ſo that the beſt of theiſtical philoſophers, were, in effect, eunomians, long before that biſhop of Cyzicus lived, who boaſted that he knew God as well as God knew himſelf. Such were the principles of that artificial theology which the Greeks had brought from Egypt and Aſia, which they carried back thither with all their own improvements, which was diſperſed from theſe countries north and ſouth, eaſt and weſt, and in the glare of which men loſt ſight of natural religion.

WHAT philoſophers began, prieſts carried on with no ſmall advantage to themſelves, but without any to religion. I will

not ſay, as generally as ſome have done, that they made it no part of their buſineſs to teach the people virtue, nor any thing more than the tricks of religion *, becauſe it is not ſtrictly true, and Mr. Locke, in his zeal againſt prieſtcraft, aſſerted a little too much. The ſchools of the philoſophers were indeed the ſchools of morality; but even the tricks of religion had ſome intention to promote it. This only I will ſay, and it is enough. The reformation of mankind was not their principal aim, and the little they did to deter men from vice was done in a method that could not fail to have, as, in fact, it had, a contrary effect. The obſervation of ceremonies, of feaſts, and ſolemnities that had no foundation in reaſon, and that were arbitrarily preſcribed by eccleſiaſtical diſcipline, tho' ſometimes under the pretence of revelation, were made the chief means of pleaſing the gods, and of pacifying them when they were angry. From hence two great miſchiefs aroſe. Religion became form and ceremony, and the obſervation of forms and ceremonies of greater moment than the practice of moral duties, tho' the practice of theſe was recommended too. This cannot be illuſtrated better than by the example of your church. No one can ſay, that ſhe allows men to cheat and to rob one another. On the contrary, ſhe requires that they ſhould be juſt in all their dealings. But yet abſolution for fraud or theft will be obtained from the prieſt, who cannot give it for eating a ſlice of meat on the vigil of ſome ſaint. Thus artificial theology and ſuperſtition oppreſſed true religion, and prieſts found the ſecret of perſuading mankind, that God was better pleaſed with obedience to their laws than to his own.

* Vid. Reaſonab. of Chriſtianity.

Thus

THUS too ſins were multiplied; and with them the terrors of an incenſed deity. But the ſame prieſts who ſpread the terrors, ſhewed eaſy means of expiating the ſins that cauſed them. Wherever ſuperſtition prevails, thoſe ſins which the prieſts make, by forbidding what the law of nature has left indifferent, or by impoſing duties that have no relation to true religion, will be always eſteemed the greateſt. Sins, therefore, which are no ſins, may be expiated very properly by puniſhments, which are no puniſhments, and ſeveral ceremonies performed may atone for ſeveral omitted. But the abuſe is abominable when the ſame expiations and atonements are applied to real ſins, and prieſts do little elſe than diſpenſe arbitrarily with the laws of nature which are the laws of GOD. That no repentance was required in theſe caſes by the pagan divines, I do not ſay. The very forms uſed in the celebration of their myſteries ſeem to ſhew that it was, and that the impenitent could not be initiated. But this very repentance was little, if any thing, more than matter of form, confeſſion, ſome temporary pennance, ablutions, purifications, and other tricks of regeneration. Amendment, without theſe, was impracticable or inſufficient, and with theſe, which might be repeated as often as occaſion required, unneceſſary, ſo that Mr. LOCKE had reaſon to ſay the prieſts ſold good pennyworths. On the whole matter, if men were more powerfully allured to virtue, and deterred from vice, by the hopes and fears of a future ſtate held out to every one in particular, than they could be by the conſequences to mankind in general, of obſerving or violating natural religion, and by the force of civil laws; yet, in the religions we ſpeak of, one part of the ſyſtem defeated the other. Some body has obſerved, MEZERAY I think, that the monſtrous crimes ſo frequent in the devout, that is in the bigot ages of the chriſtian church, were encou-

raged by this very devotion. Men were enough bigots to believe, that the pardon of GOD might be obtained for money, or poſſeſſions given to his prieſts, and that crimes of the blackeſt dye might be expiated by undertaking a pilgrimage, in perſon, or by proxy, to Rome, "ad limen apoſtolorum." This traffic, for ſuch it was, became ſo frequent, that, even in times leſs antient, the church of Rome found it neceſſary to publiſh a tariff, or book of rates, which I have ſeen in print*, wherein the price is ſet over againſt every ſin, leſt purchaſers ſhould be impoſed upon; and ſuch ſins are ſpecified, as the moſt polluted imagination would hardly conceive. If this abuſe was not ſo exorbitant in the pagan as in the chriſtian church, ſomething of the ſame kind muſt have been practiſed wherever men were taught to fear an angry GOD, and to believe, at the ſame time, that they could pacify him with offerings and ſacrifices, or, to uſe an expreſſion of PLATO's, compound with him as they would with an uſurer.

THIS ſingle reaſon will account better for the ſmall progreſs that was made by the heathen philoſophers, in reforming mankind, than all thoſe that CLARKE brings. But there is another, and a greater, miſchief ſtill behind. Religion gave occaſion to atheiſm, as dogmatiſm did to ſcepticiſm. Superſtitious worſhip, founded in abſurd opinions concerning the divine nature, had an effect, in that age, which I wiſh it had never had ſince. DIAGORAS, for inſtance, might aſſume that ſuch a ſuperſtitious worſhip as he beheld could be paid to fictitious gods alone, and ſeeing no other worſhip, he might conclude there were no other gods. From the ridiculous worſhip, and the abſurd theology that prevailed in all the countries they knew, both he, and THEODORUS, who lived

* In the late CHARLES BERNARD's Library.

more

more than twenty olympiads after him, and many more avowed or concealed atheiſts, might draw the ſame concluſions, and be mad enough not to diſcern that a few local obſervations were not ſufficient to invalidate a propoſition that might be true independently of them, and that there might be a GOD, and a true worſhip of him, tho' all the gods of Greece were fictitious, and the adoration of them was mere ſuperſtition.

THESE men were plunged at once, and by indignation, as it were, into atheiſm; whilſt others went into it by dint of philoſophical refinements more leiſurely, leſs directly, and ſome of them againſt the primitive doctrines of their own ſchools.

XXXI.

LET us conſider what happened in the academy, and what the conſequence was of all that metaphyſical theology which the founder was ſuppoſed, by his immediate ſucceſſors, and by other philoſophers, to have taught dogmatically. If SPEUSIPPUS, XENOCRATES, CRATES, CRANTOR, and POLEMO did not teach exactly the ſame dogmas, they taught on the ſame principles of chimerical knowledge that their founder had done; and, in this ſenſe, it might be ſaid, "quæ acceperant tuebantur." Other ſects of dogmatiſts aroſe at the ſame time, and among the reſt one which gave a principal occaſion to that revolution in the academy which ARCESILAUS began, and CARNEADES improved. The ſect, I mean, was that of the ſtoics, concerning whom it is true to ſay, that their theology and their moral philoſophy were alike abſurd. By one they drew the divinity down to be a

fort

ſort of plaſtic, intelligent, fiery nature. By the other, they ſtrained their notions of human wiſdom and virtue ſo high, that man was obliged to God for neither: he gave them to himſelf, and God and man were in theſe reſpects nearly on a level.

ZENO, who founded the portic, had been an auditor in the academy, and was accuſed of pirating his philoſophy from the leſſons of XENOCRATES and POLEMO, when he ſet up his ſchool as a rival to the other. POLEMO had taught, that the world was God, for inſtance: and ZENO had adopted this among other extravagancies. When the conteſt ran high between him and ARCESILAUS, the latter ſaw by this inſtance, and by many, that he lay under a double diſadvantage. He had the doctrines of his own ſchool to defend, and it was no eaſy taſk to defend, by reaſon, a ſyſtem of imagination. His adverſaries had often the authority of his own ſchool, and of the founder of it, to urge againſt him, when he attacked them even in their weakeſt parts. He changed, therefore, his method of philoſophiſing. No matter whether he did it, as LUCULLUS ſays, by introducing a new one, or, as CICERO affirms *, by reviving and avowing the old one. When the maxim was eſtabliſhed, that nothing could be known, "nihil "cognoſci, nihil percipi, nihil ſciri poſſe," the academicians could always attack, and never be attacked. This I take to have been the political ſecret of ARCESILAUS. But whatever his ſecret was, he eſtabliſhed ſcepticiſm: and SOCRATES and PLATO had given him but too much reaſon, to make it the academical principle. As there was little difference, except in name, between the ſecond and third academy, ſo there was little that it is eaſy or worth our while to aſcertain, between

* in Academ.

this

this ſect, and another founded, about the ſame time, by that melancholy mad man PYRRHO. One acknowledged probability: both denied certainty.

THE Pyrrhonian is againſt all ſides: and all ſides are againſt him. He is a common enemy, "hoſtis philoſophici gene-"ris." The academician would paſs, if he could, for a neuter, who is for no ſide, nor againſt any; or elſe for a trimmer, who changes ſides often, and finds the probable ſometimes on one, ſometimes on the other. TULLY, moſt of whoſe works are come down to us, is a ſtanding portrait in our ſight of the true academician. In his academical queſtions he oppoſes, to LUCULLUS, the variety, and the repugnancy, of all the philoſophical ſyſtems. In his books, about the nature of gods, he makes COTTA oppoſe the epicureans and the ſtoicians both in their turns. The concluſion is always againſt embracing any of theſe ſyſtems, and ſo far doubtleſs he concluded well. But here lay the error. When he aſſented to the probability of ſome, and to the certainty of no propoſition whatever, he confounded truth with falſehood, as LUCULLUS objects to him that he did; juſt as much as the ſect of LUCULLUS, or any other dogmatiſts, who put every thing they advanced into the ſame claſs of certainty. The ſtoicians would have aſſented to this propoſition, "it is now light in a full ſunſhine" with the ſame aſſurance, and with no more than they would have aſſented at any other time to this, "the world is a wiſe being." Such has been the dogmatical impertinence, for it deſerves this name, of all thoſe in every age, and in every ſect of philoſophy or religion, who have imagined they could impoſe by authority, or who have had the affectation of framing complete ſyſtems, concerning the univerſal order and ſtate of things, divine and human. It is this practice which had laid the men who ſubmitted to it under a ſort of intellectual tyranny, and

which has driven thoſe, who have not ſubmitted to it, into a ſort of intellectual anarchy. The fault of all lies at the door of the dogmatiſt; for there is in ſcience, as there is in government, a middle between tyranny and anarchy, far better than either of them. I will explain myſelf by two examples: and they ſhall be very modern, that the ancients may not bluſh alone.

ONE of the CROZATS, a family well known at Paris, went to take his leave of CLEMENT the eleventh, before he returned from Rome. The holy father aſked, whether he had finiſhed his purchaſe of a certain collection of paintings? CROZAT anſwered, that he had not; that there were ſeveral obſcene pieces in the collection, and that the confeſſors, in his country, would not allow him to keep them. The Pope reflected on this occaſion, with no ſmall concern, on the number of Janſeniſts, who teach a more rigid morality, and who abound in the church of France. However, ſaid the Pontiff, you might conclude your purchaſe, becauſe it would be eaſy to ſell ſuch of thoſe paintings, as your confeſſor would not ſuffer you to keep. CROZAT replied, that the ſame confeſſors, who would not ſuffer him to keep them, would as little permit him to ſell them, and thereby contribute to the ſin of another. CLEMENT ſmiled at the ſcruple, and propoſed an expedient. Tho' your confeſſor, ſaid his holineſs, ſhould object, if you ſold theſe pictures to catholics, he could have no objection to make, if you ſold them to heretics, to the Engliſh for inſtance. That is, the Engliſh neither believe in me, nor in any thing like me; they had, therefore, as good believe in nothing; they are, therefore, damned, and a ſin the more will do none of them any great harm.

THE other example ſhall be that of a better divine perhaps than the Pope but of as great a dogmatiſt. CLARKE undertook to demonſtrate not only the being and attributes of GOD, and the obligations of natural religion by reaſon; but even the truth and certainty of chriſtian revelation. Now the latter of theſe being his ultimate view, it was neceſſary that he ſhould prove the two firſt in ſuch a manner, and by ſuch arguments, as were not always the beſt and the moſt perſuaſive, but were the fitteſt to demonſtrate, on pretended grounds of reaſon, ſuch a ſcheme, order and ſtate of things as were agreeable to chriſtian revelation, and to the received principles of the church. If he could not carry reaſon with him throughout, he reſolved to carry ſome appearances of it, and for that purpoſe he argues in ſuch a manner, and attempts to eſtabliſh ſuch notions from the firſt, as he flattered himſelf would ſecure theſe appearances to him on every part of his ſubject, aſſiſted with all the ſkill, all the ſubtilty, and all the plauſibility, he was able to employ. When he is to prove, that the firſt cauſe is an intelligent cauſe, without which he had proved in effect nothing, he has recourſe to arguments "à poſteri-"ori." There are, indeed, no others, and he owns as much; for which reaſon he might have been more favorable to them, than I have obſerved already that he was. But he could not have eſtabliſhed by them ſome things, that he hoped to eſtabliſh by the others, as I ſhall have occaſion to ſhew more fully, when I come to vindicate providence againſt the joint accuſations of atheiſts and divines. All that I mean, and that is to my purpoſe to obſerve here, is this. A neceſſary connection between the natural and moral attributes of GOD, no man, who believes in him, will deny; all the perfections of an all-perfect Being muſt be conſiſtent and connected; to be otherwiſe would be imperfection. Divines,

therefore, will have nothing on this head with which to reproach any true theiſt: and they had beſt take care that the true theiſt has no juſt occaſion to reproach them for ſetting theſe attributes at variance, as he might have, if he followed the rule CLARKE quotes from TULLY*, and conſidered the conſequences of their opinions without regarding what they affirm, nor how honorably they may ſeem to ſpeak of ſome particular attributes of GOD†. But that which may be reproached to CLARKE, and for which I produce his example, is, that when he has aſſerted juſtice, and goodneſs, and the reſt of the moral attributes to be in GOD, juſt what they are in our imperfect, unſteady, complex ideas; when he has aſſerted, that the rule, according to which GOD exerciſes theſe attributes, the nature and reaſon of things reſulting from the fitneſs and unfitneſs of their relations, is obvious to the underſtandings of all intelligent beings, and when he has rather repeated theſe bold propoſitions over and over than proved them (for how ſhould he prove them?) he triumphs in this fooliſh and wicked rhodomontade, that the man who denies the moral attributes, ſuch as he makes them to be, for moral attributes, in general, are not concerned, may be reduced to a neceſſity of denying the natural likewiſe, and conſequently into abſolute atheiſm. Your Pope pretends to make univerſal and infallible decrees in matters of religion; our doctor infallible demonſtrations: and both of them ſend every one to the devil, who does not believe in them, and in all caſes like them.

* Quaſi ego id curem quid ille aiat aut neget: illud quæro quid ei conſentaneum ſit dicere. de Fin. L. 2.

† Evid. p. 22.

XXXII.

THO' I do not believe PLATO to have been a dogmatiſt, even when he appears ſuch, on the faith of St. AUSTIN, any more than I believe ARCESILAUS to have diſguiſed his real ſentiments, and to have continued a dogmatiſt, even when he avowed ſcepticiſm, on the faith of the ſame ſaint, or of a paſſage in SEXTUS EMPIRICUS; yet muſt it be owned that SOCRATES and he laid the foundation of a metaphyſical dogmatiſm, which the latter Pythagoricians and Platonicians revived long afterwards, and which prevails to this day. It was a maxim of theirs, that we may have knowledge concerning things perceptible by intellect, but opinion only concerning things perceptible by ſenſe; and it was on the ſtrength of this maxim, perhaps, that the former, after he had brought philoſophy down from the clouds, went up thither again to find the principles of morality, and the rules of human life. Whether we pretend, like thoſe philoſophers, to contemplate immaterial forms, and the eternal ideal archetypes that exiſt in GOD, or whether we aſſert, that all the relations of things appear to us what they are abſolutely and neceſſarily in themſelves, there is an infallible, tho' human criterion eſtabliſhed to which, ſays CLARKE, and he quotes the bible for it, even GOD himſelf appeals.

FROM ſuch knowledge as this, knowledge which no man ever had, nor could have, the whole ſyſtem of artificial theology, which corrupted natural religion, was deduced. It ſerved in no ſort to promote the reformation of mankind, and it involved the profeſſors of it in a thouſand difficulties and diſputes that rendered them ridiculous to one another and every one perhaps to himſelf, unleſs there were ſome as enthuſiaſtical

thuſiaſtical and as mad in thoſe days as PLOTINUS, PORPHYRY, JAMBLICUS, and others grew to be after the beginning of chriſtianity. Thus it came about that the great theological, that is, the platonic ſchool went from one extreme into another. It ſuited the vanity of theſe philoſophers better to aſſert that nothing was to be known in general, than to own that the reputation of their ſchool in particular had been raiſed on a fantaſtic ſcience: and after exerciſing their wit to prove that they were maſters of divine knowledge, they exerciſed it to prove that they knew nothing, no not the exiſtence of a Supreme Being.

THE truth is, that the philoſophy of the academy became little more than an exerciſe of wit and eloquence. TULLY purges himſelf, in one place, from the imputation of engaging in the academical ſect on theſe motives, or on that of loving to diſpute *; and yet he confeſſes, in the ſecond Tuſculan, that the cuſtom of diſputing on every ſide pleaſed him, becauſe it was "maxima dicendi exercitatio.". But whatever engaged him in it, his engagements carried him very far, as we may ſee in his books of the nature of the gods. I cite theſe, becauſe they ſerve extremely to my purpoſe, which is to ſhew, by contraſting the ſtoicians and the academicians together (for the Epicureans cannot have their place here, tho' they too were dogmatiſts) how unfit the philoſophers of both theſe ſchools were, from very oppoſite cauſes and different extremes, to eſtabliſh the fundamental principle of true religion, or indeed to eſtabliſh any thing. The diſcourſe of BALBUS is a rhapſody of ſenſe and nonſenſe, of very good arguments "à poſteriori" that there is a GOD, "eſſe aliquod numen præſtantiſſimæ "mentis," of ſophiſtical ſyllogiſms to prove the ſame thing

* Oſtentatione aliquâ . . . . aut ſtudio certandi.

"à priori,"

" à priori," and of idle traditions, gravely produced, to confirm the whole by fact as well as reaſon. All this he advances with equal aſſurance, the weak and the ſtrong, the falſe and the true. BALBUS could do no otherwiſe. He had the taſk of explaining and defending artificial, not natural theology, ſuperſtition, not religion. He was obliged, therefore, as all they are whoſe ultimate end is error, to proceed from the firſt on principles ill aſſumed, to reaſon falſely, and to conclude precariouſly, but dogmatically. The diſcourſe of COTTA is an ingenious declamation, wherein he refutes the ſtoical ſyſtem, and renders it ridiculous. But then he diſputes ſo vehemently againſt it, and his arguments extend ſo far, that TULLY * makes his own brother accuſe the pontiff directly, and himſelf by conſequence indirectly, of atheiſm. " Studio contra " ſtoicos diſſerendi, deos mihi videtur funditus tollere." What ſays TULLY in his own name? He tells his brother, that COTTA diſputes in that manner, rather to confute the ſtoics, than to deſtroy the religion of mankind " . . . magis . . . " quam ut hominum deleat religionem." But QUINCTUS anſwers, that is, TULLY makes him anſwer, he was not the bubble of an artifice, employed to ſave the appearance of departing from the public religious inſtitutions, " ne communi " jure migrare videatur." When you join to this ſhort converſation, the expreſſion, which concludes the third book of the nature of the gods, where TULLY ſays very drily, that the diſputation of BALBUS ſeemed to him the moſt probable " ad " veritatis ſimilitudinem propenſior," you will ſee that, if the academicians did not profeſs atheiſm, becauſe they could profeſs nothing, yet ſome of them might eſteem this to be the moſt probable opinion, as TULLY eſteemed that of theiſm to be, even when the abſurdities of the portic were blended with

* De Divin. L. 1.

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it or deduced from it. Thus doubt, concerning the exiſtence of any ſuperior Being, aroſe in the ſame ſchool, from which ſo much artificial theology had been propagated: and the ſublime doctrines of the divine PLATO ended in arrant ſcepticiſm as they led to it, and as he deſigned they ſhould, if the man in the world who admired him the moſt, who ſeemed to have lived with him, and who would rather have erred with him, than have been in the right with others, all which are TULLY's own profeſſions, knew him better than St. AUSTIN or any modern pedant.

XXXIII.

THESE firſt and crude reflections may be ſufficient to ſhew that the heathen philoſophers were not unable to reform mankind, for the reaſons given by Dr. CLARKE, but for reaſons of a very different kind. I might even have ſaved myſelf the trouble perhaps of deſcending into ſo many particulars; ſince it would have been not only an anſwer "ad "hominem," but a full anſwer to all that can be urged in favor of the ſame hypotheſis, to have aſked, whether the reformation, which heathen philoſophers could not bring about effectually, has been effected under the jewiſh and chriſtian diſpenſations? Under theſe, all the knowledge, and all the means, which are aſſumed to be neceſſary, and to have been deficient in the ſtate of paganiſm, as well as ſome means really wanting to the philoſophers, were amply ſupplied.

CONSIDER Judaiſm as a religion given by GOD himſelf, in the moſt oſtenſible manner, to a people whom he choſe to be his peculiar people, whom he ſeparated from the reſt of

mankind, and with whom he made a ſolemn covenant. Conſider the whole ſeries of miracles, that were wrought to convince, to perſuade, to aſſiſt and defend, to reward and to puniſh this people occaſionally. Add to all this, that God exerciſed kingly power amongſt them for a time, and that the Shecinah, or his divine preſence over the mercy-ſeat, continued amongſt them till the deſtruction of their firſt temple. Conſider this, and then conſider that their hiſtory is little elſe than a relation of their rebelling and repenting, of their proneneſs to one, and of the extreme difficulty with which they were drawn, even by ſupernatural means, to the other. Conſider that theſe rebellions were not thoſe of particular men, ſurpriſed and hurried into diſobedience by their paſſions, but national deliberate violations of the law, and defiances of the Supreme Being. Is it poſſible that any one, who believes the hiſtory of the bible true, ſhould believe, after he has read it, that the want of a divine authority, and of a principle higher than reaſon, hindered the heathen philoſophers from reforming the world effectually; that they would have ſucceeded, if they had really had them, as they ſometimes pretended to them: and that, for this reaſon, which they were ſagacious enough to diſcover, they deſired and expected a revelation? Surely it is impoſſible.

The Jews had not ſuch continual and immediate communications with God by their high prieſt and their prophets, after their return from the babylonian captivity, as before it, neither were they eye-witneſſes of ſuch frequent manifeſtations of his glory and power, as their fathers had been: and yet what a reformation, in point of religion, was wrought among them after the re-eſtabliſhment of their church and ſtate? How much more zealouſly and ſteadily were they attached to their law? This difference was owing, no doubt,

to the inſtitution of ſynagogues in every place where a congregation of ten perſons could be aſſembled, and to other improvements of their eccleſiaſtical diſcipline and worſhip, which had a worderful effect on the ſpirit of the people, raiſed it to enthuſiaſm, but preſerved it orthodox. SOCRATES and PLATO then, to quote no others of the heathen philoſophers, might have had the ſame ſucceſs, in reforming the manners of men, and in reſtoring the purity of natural religion at Athens, without any divine miſſion, that ESDRAS and NEHEMIAS had at Jeruſalem in reviving and improving more effectually the ceremonies and obſervances of judaiſm, by means which experience and good policy ſuggeſted to them, if the two greeks had been, as the two jews were, the legiſlators and ſecond founders of their commonwealth.

THERE is ſo little pretence to draw the ſhadow of an argument, from the ineffectual endeavours of the heathen philoſophers to reform the world, that the world has not been effectually reformed, nor any one nation in it, even by the promulgation of the goſpel, even where chriſtianity has flouriſhed moſt in ſpeculation and external devotion. The Son of GOD, GOD himſelf, came upon earth, was born of a woman, lived among men, preached a new covenant, wrought miracles, ſent his diſciples to all nations, who eſtabliſhed his church among them. What has happened? This church has been ſo far from reforming mankind, that it ſtood in need of being itſelf reformed as ſoon as it was eſtabliſhed. The gates of hell have not yet prevailed againſt it, and we are to believe that they never will. But the gates of hell have ſhook it extremely in all ages, and the prince of hell has made from the firſt moſt terrible incurſions within the pale of it. Much zeal has been expreſſed about articles of faith, much regard has been paid to the outward ſervice of GOD; and wealth, and power, and pomp, and dignity have been

been laviſhly beſtowed on an order of men, who affect to be thought ſucceſſors to the apoſtles, and whoſe inſtitution is avowedly directed to reform the manners of men as well as preſerve the purity of faith. Every defect, except that of not living up to their doctrines, which is ſuppoſed to have rendered the preachers of natural religion incapable of reforming the world, has been ſupplied in the preachers of revealed religion. The doctrines of theſe men have been certainly enforced by a divine authority: and they have been aſſiſted by an higher principle than philoſophy and bare reaſon. They had anciently all the advantages of oppoſition and perſecution. They have enjoyed ever ſince, and during a courſe of fourteen centuries, all thoſe of ſupport and of favor from civil government and of blind ſubmiſſion from the people. With all theſe advantages they have not wrought a more effectual reformation. Morality has not been better taught by them, nor better practiſed under their influence. On the contrary, having united in themſelves the two characters of philoſophers and prieſts, they have often ſacrificed the former to the latter, not for the ſake of revealed religion, which is founded on natural, and can require no ſuch ſacrifice, but, like the prieſts of paganiſm, for the ſake of their craft.

Examples will be brought, I know, in oppoſition to what is here advanced. Examples of a religious zeal, which prevailed among all the primitive chriſtians, to ſuch a degree, that tho' ſome of them declined, many of them courted, martyrdom; examples of particular men who have deſerved a ſort of apotheoſis for the purity of their doctrines and the ſanctity of their lives; and examples on the other hand of pagan ferocity and cruelty, contraſted with chriſtian moderation and charity. It would not be hard, but it would be a long and invidious taſk, to ſhew, in a variety of inſtances, how partially theſe examples

are produced, and theſe compariſons are made. Let us be content with a few general reflections.

That a religious and enthuſiaſtical zeal animated many of the primitive chriſtians, both the orthodox and the heretics, is moſt certain. But to make the example prove what it is deſigned to prove, this zeal ſhould have been ſingular, a peculiar effect of chriſtian revelation; whereas nothing is, nor has been ever more common. The zeal of the Jews, whilſt they lived in the midſt of revelations and miracles, was not comparable to that which they ſhewed when they had nothing but the fooliſh comments of their Miſhnical doctors, inſtead of one, and enthuſiaſtical viſions and ſuperſtitious ſigns inſtead of the other. We ſhall find the ſame if we go for examples to many of the pagan nations. We ſhall find not only particular men, but whole bodies of men, among them, as well as among chriſtians, ready to devote themſelves to death, not only for their abſurd religions, but for their attachment to a party, or to the moſt whimſical point of imaginary honor. It is not much to that of revelation, therefore, to aſcribe to it what may be the effect of impoſture and error: and enthuſiaſm is no more a proof of true religion, than martyrdom is of a good cauſe.

The examples of men, reputed ſaints for the purity of their doctrine, and the holy auſterity of their lives, will avail as little to ſhew that the chriſtian revelation reformed the world, any more than the endeavours of heathen philoſophers. Their doctrines, the doctrines of theſe ſaints I mean, were ſuch as related either to the metaphyſical ſpeculations of theology, and to the practice of ceremonies and rites eſtabliſhed for outward worſhip and eccleſiaſtical diſcipline, or to moral obligations and the duties of natural religion. About the

the firſt, and ſecond, it muſt be confeſſed that the paſtors of the church were in thoſe days as they are in ours, extremely intent. But the diſputes that aroſe among them, on all ſuch occaſions, and the ſcandal with which they were carried on by all ſides, leave it very doubtful to whom this purity is to be aſcribed, and much more probable that it was to be aſcribed to none. It ſeems that no ſide had a good claim to it, in many caſes, whilſt the diſputes laſted. When they were determined by councils, however this determination was procured, a ſtandard of purity was aſſumed to be fixed; and authority did what neither reaſon nor revelation could do, it aſcertained orthodoxy in belief and practice, till new diſputes aroſe, or till old ones were revived. Theſe doctrines and theſe rites have been ſo far from reforming the world, that they have promoted, by the diſputes raiſed about them, more hatred, malice and uncharitableneſs, than ever was in it before. They have diminiſhed the flames neither of ambition nor avarice. They have added freſh fuel to them, and have kindled new flames of their own. In ſhort, the examples of theſe ſaints, with reſpect to theſe doctrines, will never prove the utility of revelation: and with reſpect to thoſe that regard moral obligations, and the duties of natural religion, they either neglected them, or taught them more imperfectly than ſeveral of the heathen philoſophers. When I ſay that they neglected them, this I mean. The theology contained in the goſpel lies in a very narrow compaſs. It is marvellous indeed, but it is plain, and it is employed throughout, to enforce natural religion. This ſeems to be the end, and revealed religion the means, both which it would have been for the honor of chriſtianity and for the good of mankind to have left ſo. But the ſaints, that have been quoted, took another courſe from the firſt. Inſtead of making theology, and the external duties of religion, ſerve as means, they

inſiſted

inſiſted on them as if knowledge in metaphyſics, ceremony and eccleſiaſtical dominion, had been the principal ends of revelation. They inſiſted on them ſo conſtantly and ſo voluminouſly, that natural religion held but the ſecond place in their ſyſtem, and that righteouſneſs of faith became much more important than righteouſneſs of works. On this account we may ſay that they neglected, in ſome ſort, the doctrines of natural religion: they practiſed them ill, and they could ſcarce fail to teach them both imperfectly and erroneouſly; ſince they derived them, "à priori," from principles of their own theology, and from the ideas they framed of the divine attributes, inſtead of deriving them "à poſteriori" from the conſtitution of the human ſyſtem. To this we muſt aſcribe the wild allegories with which they perplexed the plaineſt dictates of reaſon, the affected refinements, which are impracticable in any national ſociety, and the immoral doctrines which ought to have been baniſhed, with the ſaints who taught them, out of all ſocieties. The charge, I bring, is not that of paſſion or prejudice, no, nor of ignorance. I am able to juſtify it in all it's parts, by ſome inſtances: and if you would ſee it made good by more, and by more learned authorities, conſult ſuch writers as BARBEYRAC, who was provoked by a ſaucy monk, to publiſh his book, "La moralité des peres." Conſult other critics, of whom there are many. Nay, conſult the authors who deny his charge: and I will appeal to your judgment on what you can find even in them, provided you weigh the facts in the balance of common ſenſe, and pay no regard to their judgments.

THUS much for purity of doctrine. Much leſs needs to be ſaid about holineſs and auſterity of life. The hiſtories of ſaints have been in all religions, even more than thoſe of any other eminent peſons, little better than panegyrical romances.

The reaſon of which is obvious enough. No man, for inſtance, is ſo ſilly, I preſume, at this time, unleſs he be a roſycrucian, as to give any more credit to the biographers of the egyptian hermits, ANTHONY and PAUL, than to thoſe of PYTHAGORAS and APPOLLONIUS of Thyana. All their relations are ſtuffed alike with the moſt evident falſehoods, the moſt puerile abſurdities, and the groſſeſt ſuperſtitions; for many of theſe were common to pagans, jews and chriſtians: and yet the firſt of the biographers, I mention, who yield in none of theſe reſpects to PORPHYRY, JAMBLICHUS, PHILOSTRATUS, or any other compiler of lying legends, were famous ſaints, ATHANASIUS and JEROM. But further, if we allow the ſanctity and auſterity of ſome particular men, or of ſome particular orders of men, to have been, and to be, as great as they are repreſented, this will be far from proving the reformation of the world by chriſtianity. There were antiently, among the heathens, chaldæans, gymnoſophiſts and others, and there are now, both among them and the mahometans, particular men, and orders of men, of great ſanctity of life, nay of greater than any amongſt chriſtians; if ſanctity be to be meaſured, as they who would make the objection I anſwer meaſure it, by auſterity. It is unneceſſary to quote the inſtances, which are to be found in all our books of travels. Even SIMEON STYLITES, who ſtood faſting and praying on the top of a column ſo many years together, has been outdone by multitudes. What now can be ſaid? If theſe examples are not ſufficient to prove that heathen philoſophers and mahometan doctors have reformed the world, will examples of the ſame, or of an inferior kind, prove that chriſtianity has?

IT will not be ſaid, I think, that luxury and debauchery have been reſtrained by chriſtianity. It was a proverbial ſaying "Daphnicis moribus vivere:" and CASSIUS, if I remember

member right, would not ſuffer his army to encamp at Antioch, leſt his ſoldiers ſhould be corrupted by the manners of the place. But where is the court or city, in which chriſtianity is profeſſed, to which this phraſe might not be applied? I know of none, nor is there any good reaſon to believe there was any ſuch antiently, neither that of CONSTANTINE, whatever his panegyriſt advances, nor that of CHARLEMAGNE, tho' your church has thought fit for other reaſons to make ſaints of both theſe princes. Upon this, therefore, divines will be aſhamed to inſiſt, or may be eaſily made ſo; ſince it is not difficult to ſhew them, that the men of their own order, who did not mend their manners afterwards, were famous even in the fourth century for following thoſe of DAPHNE. But it will be ſounded high that the patience, moderation and charity, which chriſtianity inſpires, ſoftened the turbulent, fierce and cruel temper of paganiſm, and wrought, by doing this, a wonderful reformation in the world. You muſt remember that this fact has been aſſerted to be undeniable, and yet it is falſe: the very contrary is true. CONSTANTINE did, I believe, expect that the eſtabliſhment of the chriſtian religion in the empire would have this effect. But his expectation proved vain: and I might appeal to the eccleſiaſtical and civil hiſtory of the laſt fourteen hundred years, that is, from his days to ours, to vouch for me. The whole tenor of them proves that revolts againſt government, and diſorders of every kind, have been at leaſt as frequent in the chriſtian world as in the pagan. There were never more, nor more unjuſt, nor more cruel wars than chriſtians have waged, and the perſecutions and maſſacres, that may be reproached to them are ſuch, in all circumſtances of inhumanity, as can be reproached to no other people except the Jews. That any part of theſe evils ought to be aſcribed to goſpel chriſtianity, I neither ſay nor believe. They cannot be reconciled to the principles of it.

But this I ſay, and believe, that the chriſtian revelation has not effectually reformed the world. There never was in itſelf a more riſible, nor in it's conſequences a more lamentable abſurdity impoſed on mankind than this, that a certain order of men ſhould be inſtituted, not only to preſide in the exerciſes of public worſhip, and to exhort others to the practice of their known duties, but to think for the reſt, and to dictate opinions to them on matters of nice ſpeculation concerning which they themſelves were never agreed, and which have no immediate connection with theſe known duties. This abſurdity, however, has prevailed in the chriſtian as in other religions of poſitive inſtitution: and in this, as in them, the ſpirit of the clergy has become the ſpirit of the religion. They, who ſhould have preached concord, have preached diſcord; and they, who ſhould have promoted peace, have animated to war. They have given continual pretence to ferocity and cruelty; they have often irritated them above their uſual exceſſes; and the prophane application of a ſcrap * of the goſpel has ſerved to deluge whole nations in blood. A private opinion, however true, that was not exactly conformable to an eccleſiaſtical deciſion, was termed hereſy: and againſt ſuch hereſy, as againſt the greateſt of crimes, the paſſions of men were inflamed under the name of zeal.

Tho' I avoid to deſcend into particulars, let me juſt compare natural ferocity and cruelty with religious, by mentioning one example of the former, and two of the latter. The barbarous people, who broke into the Roman empire, had no motives but thoſe of plundering wealthy provinces, and ſettling in better climates. Religion was ſo far from being a motive to theſe enterpriſes, that they embraced generally that of the

* Compel them to come in.

nations they conquered. They were guilty, no doubt, of great violence and cruelty; but when you have read the moſt exaggerated accounts of their proceedings, read thoſe which are contained in the Bible, of the invaſion of Paleſtine, and thoſe which Spaniſh authors themſelves give of the invaſion of America. Theſe events that happened at an immenſe diſtance of time, and were brought about under very different œconomies of religion and policy, are, therefore, the more proper to ſhew how religion may furniſh a pretence to natural ferocity and cruelty, as well as aggravate both; and that it has always done ſo either by it's own ſpirit, as in the caſe of judaiſm, or by that of it's teachers, as in the caſe of chriſtianity. When the Iſraelites marched to the conqueſt of Canaan, the ark and the prieſts marched before them. An antient promiſe, which GOD made to ABRAHAM, when he made that covenant with him which was the foundation of their religion, was the foundation of the juſtice of this expedition, and the immediate commands of GOD were urged to authoriſe ſuch extirpations of people, as no other hiſtory can parallel, as it is impoſſible to read without horror, as were unneceſſary to give them a ſecure poſſeſſion of the country, and as neither this reaſon, nor any other, could excuſe. When the Spaniards ſailed to the conqueſt of America, ſilver and gold were their objects, but the propagation of the goſpel was their pretence. That wretch, pope ALEXANDER the ſixth, made them a donation of an entire hemiſphere: and prieſts and monks were ſent, that they might add the fury of bigotry to that of avarice.

I might reſt the matter here, having ſaid enough to ſhew how falſe and trifling the argument is which CLARKE endeavours to draw from an incapacity in the heathen philoſophers, both for want of knowledge, which was not, and for

want of other means, which was their caſe, to reform mankind, and from the aſſumed ſufficiency of revelation alone to produce this effect. But I chuſe to wind up the whole, by deſiring you to retrace, in your mind, the progreſs made in ſociability, civility, and every moral virtue, in the heathen republics of Greece and Rome, before and ſince the chriſtian revelation. Authors may declaim as much as they pleaſe, to aggravate particular vices, and to take of from the luſtre of particular virtues; they will perſuade no man, who reads and judges for himſelf, that the practice of piety and virtue has increaſed among the Greeks, from the time of CONSTANTINE downwards, under the influence of chriſtian paſtors, as it did, under the influence of heathen philoſophers and legiſlators; from the time when THUCIDIDES repreſents them like lawleſs ſavages, who went pirating and raviſhing about, to the days when Athens and Sparta floriſhed. As little will the ſame authors perſuade that the diſtance in virtue between that rout of ſhepherds and outlaws who formed a ſtate under ROMULUS, and the citizens of Rome in the beſt ages of that commonwealth, was not vaſtly greater than any improvement of the ſame kind, that was made among them, from the time that Rome became chriſtian.

IF it appears now to be true, in fact, that neither reaſon nor revelation, neither heathen nor chriſtian philoſophers, neither human nor divine laws, have been able to reform the manners of men effectually; may we not, nay muſt we not conclude that ſuch a reformation is inconſiſtent with the original conſtitution of the human ſyſtem? Muſt we not conclude that appetites, paſſions, and the immediate objects of pleaſure, will be always of greater force to determine men than reaſon, and the more remote object as well as complicated notion of happineſs? Such is the imperfect ſtate

in which we are placed; a ſtate wherein the vice and virtue of our moral, like the good and evil of our phyſical world, prevail in their turns, and are often, at the beſt, and in the moſt favorable circumſtances, but equally ballanced on the whole. Why there is ſuch a ſtate as this, and how to reconcile it to the ideas of holineſs and goodneſs, let thoſe men inquire who ſay that GOD appeals to man, who take him at his word, and preſume to judge him accordingly. But let you and I pronounce; that ſince there is ſuch a ſtate as this in the univerſal ſyſtem, it was fit and right that there ſhould be ſuch a ſtate. On this head we may, we ought to be dogmatical.

XXXIV.

WHAT has been here laid down is ſo far from making natural, or revealed religion, or any means that tend to the reformation of mankind, unneceſſary, that it makes them all more neceſſary. Since our ſtate is ſo imperfect, ſince it is ſo hard to keep the virtues that are intimately connected with the happineſs, and the vices that are intimately connected with the miſery of mankind, even on a balance, nothing ſhould be neglected that may give the advantage to the former, by enforcing moral obligations and all the doctrines of natural religion. As nothing ſhould be neglected, ſo nothing may ſeem in ſpeculation ſo proper to this purpoſe as a true revelation, or a revelation believed to be true: and if experience has not confirmed ſpeculation in the caſe of a revelation we believe to be true, if chriſtianity, which has enforced natural religion in ſome reſpects, has corrupted it in others, the maxim may ſtill remain unſhook. The natural, the genuine effect of the goſpel has been defeated and perverted, and much has been done towards leſſening

ſening the authority of it, by the manner in which it has been propagated.

If it had been propagated with the ſame ſimplicity and plainneſs, with which it was taught originally, by the author of it, natural religion would have been enforced, and could not have been corrupted by chriſtianity; but a voluminous and intricate ſyſtem of artificial theology was graſted on it, both which obſervations have been made already, and muſt be often repeated for the honor of the goſpel. This ſyſtem was framed ſoon by habits contracted in the ſchools of judaiſm and paganiſm. In the firſt, their ſecond or oral law, that is their traditions were taught: and what this ſcience was may be ſeen in the collection of them made a century and an half after Christ, by one of their Rabbins *; the ſmall obligation of being acquainted with which we ignorant perſons owe to the labors of ſeveral great ſcholars. What the ſcience taught in the others was we know from the remains of Pythagorean doctrines, and from the writings of Plato, that are come down to us, and that were in great vogue among the firſt teachers of chriſtianity. Well might theſe men grow credulous in one, fantaſtical in the other, and ſuperſtitious in both. Such were they whom we call very properly fathers of the church, ſince they begot the diſcipline, and much the greateſt part of the doctrines of it. Eaſily impoſed upon, and prone to impoſe, like the Jews, fond of myſtery and of principles of knowledge laid beyond the bounds of all knowledge, like Pythagoric and Platonic metaphyſicians, it is no wonder that they ran into theological obſcurity with the light of the goſpel ſhining before them. Accuſtomed to declaim rather than reaſon, and to employ figurative ſtyle even on ſubjects

* Judah Hakkadoſh, or the holy.

that require the moſt exact determination of ideas and preciſion of terms, like the rhetors of Greece and Rome, accuſtomed to advance intrepidly whatever ſerved to the preſent purpoſe, without any regard to truth, like the ſophiſts of thoſe ages, which practice St. JEROM* defended and imputed to St. PETER and St. PAUL, it is no wonder that they oppoſed ſometimes error to error, and very often jargon to jargon.

SUCH ſcience as this, and ſuch habits as theſe, produced infinite abſurdities, grounded on precarious tradition and falſe reaſoning, with which I ſhall meddle in this place no further than the ſubject before me requires. To ſeek the will of GOD, and the duty of man, in the conſtitution of the world, and of the human nature, wherein they are moſt evidently revealed, would have been deemed too low a manner of philoſophiſing for thoſe men to take, who pretended to gifts of the ſpirit, whilſt that opinion was riſe amongſt the firſt chriſtians; and when it was ſo no longer, their ſucceſſors had a recourſe that ſerved them almoſt as well. They ſought the will of GOD, and the duty of man, in their own comments and paraphraſes of ſcripture, in the abſtract reaſon of things, and in the eternal ideas, where SOCRATES and PLATO had ſent men to find whatever is unknown on earth, as ARIOSTO ſends them to the moon to find whatever is loſt on earth. They deduced moral obligations from the divine attributes, of which they might think themſelves more competent judges than others, becauſe they thought themſelves better informed by the Jews of his manner of government, and by chriſtian tradition, if I dare to ſay ſo, of his private life and converſation.

* Vid. Comm. in Ep. ad Gal. C. 2.

THESE

These methods of framing and defending a ſyſtem of religion were very convenient. They were in the hands of the fathers, what the cabbala was in thoſe of the rabbins. If they did not make an oral, they made a ſecond law, neceſſary like the other in pretence to the perfection and to the intelligence of the firſt; and that gathered as it rolled on, till it became as voluminous, and, by dint of explanation and commentary, as abſtruſe. Among other recommendations, inſiſted on by Clarke, of theſe methods of reaſoning, from the divine attributes, and the eternal reaſon of things, to the moral obligations, under which we were laid by the will of God, whereof I ſpeak particularly here, and to the deſigns of God in creating the world and man, as well as to the conduct of his providence, in the government of the whole, whereof I ſhall ſpeak hereafter, the univerſality of them is one. Now it is this very univerſality which aggravates the preſumption of mankind, which ſets the danger of theſe methods of reaſoning in a ſtronger light, and which proves invincibly againſt him, that they are far from being what he aſſerts they are, the beſt, cleareſt and certaineſt that philoſophy affords. When we deduce the will of God, and the duty of man, from the conſtitution of the world, and of the human nature, we deduce them from real knowledge; and we may have the certainty of this knowledge, through all the parts of natural religion, if we never loſe ſight of the firſt principles of it. That men loſe this certainty, both philoſophers and others, both they who reaſon "à priori," and ſometimes they who reaſon "à "poſteriori," is true. The vaſt variety of opinions concerning the morality and immorality of actions, and the number of contradictory laws that have been all made with the ſame deſign, to promote the practice of natural religion, ſhew it to be ſo. But the difference lies here. Tho' neither of theſe methods

methods can ſecure men abſolutely from error in forming general maxims, and much leſs in the particular applications even of ſuch of theſe as are true, yet they have in one caſe a ſure criterion, and in the other none at all. The reaſoner "à "poſteriori" may at all times go back to thoſe principles of knowledge from which he ſet out, and which he will find always the ſame, retrace his own reaſonings, and rectify his miſtakes. But whither ſhall the reaſoner "à priori" go? Shall he go back to the abſtract reaſon of things, and to the moral attributes of the deity, from which he ſet out? But in them, as often as he has recourſe to them, he will find no ſuch criterion. The notions of other men will differ from his, and the firſt principles of his boaſted knowledge, for want of ſuch a criterion, will be founded in probability at beſt. It required no ſuch metaphyſical apparatus, as CLARKE employs ſomewhat tediouſly, to prove that all perfections natural and moral muſt be attributes of the ſelf-exiſtent, all-perfect author of all being; but he does not prove what he aſſerts, and on the proof of which his whole argument turns, that theſe attributes are the ſame in GOD, as they are in our ideas *. He ſays indeed that he has proved it: and if we do not accept his proofs he leaves us to recur to downright atheiſm; nay, he threatens to force us into it. Happily he has not been able to do the miſchief he meditated. Many a man believes in GOD, who does not believe in him. Many a man diſcerns, in their fulleſt light, the evidences of natural religion, and gives their due weight to thoſe of revealed religion, without taking aſſumptions for demonſtrations, and a chain of the former, which have an imaginary connection only, for a chain of the latter riſing out of one another, and cloſely connected together.

* Evid. P. 33, 34, et alibi.

I have

I have enlarged the rather on this head, becauſe the example of this modern divine is extremely proper to give us an image of the antient divines who raiſed the theological ſyſtem. Few of them reaſoned ſo well even as he, but they ſet the manner which he and the reſt of their ſucceſſors have followed: a manner which may ſerve, as it did formerly, and as it does ſtill, in ſome degree, to realiſe, in appearance, the whimſies of every over-heated brain, and to maintain indeterminable diſputes: a manner which proving almoſt every thing, proves almoſt nothing; and which, if it can be of any uſe, can be ſo only under the controul of the other method. It can be only of ſubordinate uſe. It may illuſtrate. It never can, it never did decide: and the diſputes it raiſed, in the early ages of chriſtianity, may be well called indeterminable, ſince they are not yet determined. I have good reaſon to ſay, tho' I cannot ſay it on my own knowledge, that ſome of them were not determined in CLARKE's own mind, tho' he has pronounced dogmatically about them in his writings.

WHEN I ſay that the method of reaſoning à priori, from the eternal reaſon of things, and from the divine attributes, may be of ſome ſubordinate uſe, under the controul of the other; I mean that altho' our moral obligations ariſe from our moral ſyſtem, that is, from the works of GOD, and the additional motives to obſerve them from the word of GOD alone, yet arguments deduced in this method, and expreſsly authoriſed by neither, may ſerve to warm the imagination, to move the affections, and by a ſort of pious fraud to enforce natural religion. A lively declamation, unſupported by reaſon, and even by goſpel revelation, concerning the whole ſcheme, order, and ſtate of things, from the original deſign

of God in the creation of man to his fall, and from thence to his redemption, a pathetical exhortation to imitate God, in the exercise of his glorious attributes, in these perfections which are the foundation of his own unchangeable happiness, in which we are able to imitate him, and in which he desires that we should imitate him, because he has an infinitely tenderer and heartier concern for us, than any earthly father has for his posterity, to speak the language of Dr. CLARKE; such declamations and such exhortations, I say, may have a great and a good effect, especially when they flow from an eloquent mouth, and from the pulpit. The man, who is convinced by his reflections on human nature, and the nature of society, for instance that benevolence, and justice, and truth are the duties of natural religion, on the practice of which his happiness, and that of his whole kind depend, will not be further convinced, but he may be more moved, and his passions may be wrought up to second his judgment.

IF the fathers of the church, and modern divines, had made no other use of this method of reasoning than to strengthen a sense of our moral obligations, and to raise in the minds of men a greater veneration for the scriptures, after they had proved the authenticity of them by external proofs, it had been well both for natural and revealed religion. But they have made a very different use of it. They have shook the former down to it's very foundation, and, under pretence of explaining and defending the other, they have laid it more open to the attacks of unbelievers. Reason is sober and modest. She never affects to lead men beyond her bounds, but delivers them over to revelation. There is, and there needs must be, something marvellous in revelation. This marvellous dazzles and often blinds; so that they who pursue it too far slide easily into the whimsies of their own imagi-

imaginations. Truth warms their brains; error that paſſes for it turns them. Thus chriſtianity became fanaticiſm, even in the firſt profeſſors of it. Thus artificial theology grew up as faſt as men began to teach the doctrine of CHRIST, like a revelation made ſo obſcurely and imperfectly, that they who were to publiſh it were to explain it, and not only to explain it, but to ſupply the deficiencies of it; and ſome will be apt to think that the firſt of theſe men was PAUL. Divines would be furious to hear ſuch language held as I hold to you. But they would be under great difficulties to evade the charge, and, therefore, the more furious; ſince I could eaſily produce paſſages out of the moſt renowned of the fathers, and out of their own writings, as extravagant as any in the Talmud, as abſurd as any in the Koran, and quite fit to hold their places in one of BORRI's letters: and ſince the whole eccleſiaſtical hiſtory is an hiſtory of the intollerance and violence of chriſtians to one another, on ſuch points as theſe, from the time they had it in their power to be intollerant and to perſecute. You will not expect a bead-roll of theſe doctrines and diſputes. It will be ſufficient to ſhew how they had the effects, that have been mentioned, both in natural and revealed religion.

XXXV.

CLARKE obſerves that there is now no ſuch thing as a conſiſtent ſcheme of theiſm. A complete one, ſuch an one as preſumes to account for the whole order and ſtate of things relatively to GOD and man, I believe there is not. But how does the learned writer make out his propoſition? That of the beſt heathen philoſophers, which alone was ſuch, ceaſes now to be ſo, he ſays, after the appearance of

revelation; becauſe it directly conducts men to the belief of chriſtianity. If he intends the ſocratical and platonic ſcheme, and he can intend no other, what he advances is untrue; unleſs it be true that a ſcheme which appears ſometimes dogmatical and ſometimes ſceptical, that favors monotheiſm and polytheiſm in the ſame breath, as it were, may be conſiſtent. If this ſcheme led to chriſtianity in any ſort, as I think it did, this was due not to the conſiſtency, but the inconſiſtency of it. Several of it's doctrines were adopted into articles of faith by chriſtianity. Others were rejected. It happened accordingly. This adoption drew ſeveral of theſe philoſophers into chriſtianity: and this rejection made ſeveral averſe to it. JUSTIN died to maintain it. PORPHYRY would have died to oppoſe it. That platoniſm was a conſiſtent ſcheme, or that it conducted men directly to chriſtianity, is not true therefore. But it is very true, that the method of reaſoning à priori, from heaven, if I may ſay ſo, that we do not know, to earth, inſtead of reaſoning from earth that we do know, to heaven, was introduced into chriſtianity with doctrines which the ſame method had broached in paganiſm; that this method continued to be in common that of thoſe who embraced the chriſtian profeſſion, and of thoſe who oppoſed it; and that it propagated fanaticiſm alike in both, as every man who compares, for inſtance, St. AUSTIN and PLOTINUS together with indifference, which every man ſhould do in ſuch a caſe, muſt confeſs.

CHRISTIAN fanaticiſm was more catching, and in that reſpect more dangerous than the other. Some of the heathen ſaints pretended to raviſhments, to extaſies, to occaſional unions with the ſupreme intelligence, and to revelation. But thoſe of chriſtianity had, beſides all theſe advantages, the word of GOD himſelf to produce againſt unbelievers, and they hawled

hawled this word ſo well to their purpoſes (the expreſſion is St. JEROM's*) that every ſide appealed to it in the diſputes they had with one another. The conſequence was, that every ſide damned all the reſt, and, which was really worſe, perſecuted them in this world. The heathens exerciſed great violence againſt one another in their quarrels about their ſecular intereſts; but religion neither cauſed nor fomented them: whereas the quarrels of this kind were the moſt frequent and the moſt inveterate among chriſtians. They broke not only the bonds of alliance between nations, but thoſe of kindred in families, and thoſe of friendſhip where it was the moſt intimate. Such quarrels turned frequently on metaphyſical ſpeculations which no ſide underſtood, or on rites and ceremonies of no importance to religion. Theſe were the objects that engroſſed, with thoſe of eccleſiaſtical power and wealth, the whole attention of the church, and, under her influence, almoſt the whole attention of the ſtate, as it appears by the behaviour of the roman emperors after CONSTANTINE, ſome of whom ſeemed to have no other concern in the greateſt diſtreſs of that empire, and in the very moment of it's fall. Nay, there is mention made of one who had a ſcruple of conſcience, about the time he ſpent in ſecular affairs, and the government of his people. Thus reformation of manners was the concern of no body: and whilſt the utmoſt diſſolution of them was practiſed and indulged by the clergy, men were perſecuted, at their inſtigation, for the leaſt ſuppoſed error in forms of ſpeech, or in forms of worſhip; and injuſtice and murder were made duties of religion on this account. Is there not ſufficient reaſon now to aſſert, that natural religion has been corrupted, and ſhook to the foundations of it, by artificial theology?

* Trahere ſcripturas.

SOCIABILITY is the great inſtinct, and benevolence the great law, of human nature, which no other law can repeal, or alter: and yet when men have accuſtomed themſelves to think of the Supreme Being, as of an human legiſlator and governor, and to aſcribe to the all-perfect Being the ſame ideas, the ſame ſentiments, affections, and paſſions, that they perceive in themſelves; they may eaſily come to imagine, or to make others imagine him as intent to preſerve the outward forms of his court, as the moſt eſſential laws of his government; and themſelves as much bound at leaſt to be good courtiers as good ſubjects. They may think themſelves ſureſt to pleaſe in the firſt of theſe characters. On a confidence in the merit of it, they may not only neglect the duties of the other, but they may ſacrifice, to a falſe notion of honoring the prince, the fundamental laws, and the conſtitution of his government. They may think, or they may repreſent themſelves to be his favorites, and they may treat even his beſt ſubjects as rebels, by virtue of laws which his miniſters make, and which he is ſuppoſed to authoriſe.

THIS alluſion to the abuſes of civil government, in the kingdoms of earthly monarchs, gives a true image of thoſe which have always prevailed in the ſpiritual kingdom of CHRIST, to the ſubverſion of it's original conſtitution: and with this alluſion I ſhall finiſh this head.

XXXVI.

BUT I have undertaken to ſhew further, that artificial theology, which has ſhaken the foundations of natural religion, has laid revealed religion much more open to the attacks

of unbelievers, by explanations and defences, than it would have been, if it had been left to ſtand without them on the proper proofs of this fact ſingly, it is a divine revelation. Now to illuſtrate this point, let us ſuppoſe a theiſt objecting to ſome modeſt reaſoner à poſteriori, who is firmly perſuaded of the authenticity of the ſcriptures, that they contain many things repugnant to the juſtice and goodneſs of God, and unworthy of his majeſty, his wiſdom and power. The believer might reply, that he knows the difference between knowledge produced by the certainty of demonſtration, and that aſſurance which the higheſt degree of probability may produce; that an aſſurance founded on any leſs degree of probability would not be ſufficient in this caſe; but that aſſurance founded on probability is the utmoſt which can be had in all caſes of this kind, and, therefore, that he thinks himſelf obliged to receive theſe books for the word of God, tho' he cannot reconcile every thing that they contain to his ideas of the attributes of an infinite all-perfect Being. He might add, that he ſees and feels many things in the conſtitution of the phyſical and moral world, and in the conduct of providence, which it is not eaſy to reconcile to the ſame attributes; and yet that he knows, with all the certainty of demonſtration, that the former are the works, and the latter the act of God. He might add, that revelation may be neceſſary to illuminate reaſon in matters of religion, becauſe there is a more immediate correſpondence in matters of religion between God and man; but that reaſon cannot explain revelation, nor much leſs enforce it; that nothing leſs than another revelation can do either, and that in the mean time it is the duty of man to ſubmit to believe what he does, and to adore what he does not, underſtand. This the reaſoner à poſteriori might reply with great plauſibility at leaſt. But the reaſoner à priori could have no right to uſe the ſame language. A

theiſt

theiſt would retort his own doctrine againſt him in this manner. "You argue, and you pretend to demonſtrate, on your "ideas of juſtice and goodneſs as well as of wiſdom and "power, and by the reaſon of things, even when your argu- "ments and your ſuppoſed demonſtrations conclude againſt "the conſtitution and government of the world, which you "and I both acknowledge to be from GOD. With what face "then can you object to me, that I reaſon upon the ſame "ideas, and by the ſame rule, concerning this book which you "acknowledge, and I do not, to be the word of GOD? Muſt "I reſpect probability more than you reſpect certainty, and "a probability which is either not eſtabliſhed, or is eſtabliſhed "by halves? It is not eſtabliſhed, if the book contains any "thing which implies an abſolute contradiction with any "conceivable perfection even of the human nature. It is "eſtabliſhed by halves, whatever external proofs you may "bring, unleſs you can ſhew that the things contained in it, "which ſeem repugnant to all our ideas of a perfect nature, "are really conſiſtent with them: which muſt be ſhewn not "by a precarious begging of the queſtion, but by direct and "evident proofs." What now muſt the reaſoner à priori do? He muſt give up the cauſe to the theiſt, or he muſt ſubmit to the taſk which the reaſoner à poſteriori evaded, by crying out from the firſt "o altitudo!" and by declining to examine any objections to matters contained in the ſcriptures: in ſhort, he puts himſelf under a neceſſity of ſhewing *, that all theſe matters are exactly conſonant to the dictates of ſound reaſon, or the unprejudiced light of nature, and moſt wiſely perfective of it †; and that all the doctrines .... neceſſary to ſalvation, or cloſely connected with ſuch as are ſo, are apparently moſt agreeable to reaſon, tho' not diſcoverable by it.

* Evid. p. 239. † Ib. p. 244.

THIS

This task has been undertaken accordingly by every divine, sanguinely and dogmatically by most, weakly by all of them. One of your acquaintance and mine * has distinguished himself, in all these respects, by writing on the subject, as he would have preached to an Irish congregation. But that such a man as Clarke should write upon it at all, and have nothing better to say than what he has said, may serve to shew how these men are led, by their manner of reasoning, and by their artificial theology, to disarm christianity of her best defence, by taking her out of the strong-hold of revelation, and by trusting to those feeble entrenchments, which they are able to cast up; for even those, which Clarke cast up, are feeble beyond belief. I am not answering his book, and shall, therefore, do no more than make a transient mention of some particulars: but I am willing to rest the truth of what I have advanced, even on this transient mention.

The doctor is to prove it agreeable to sound unprejudiced reason, to believe that the Supreme Being did generate a divine person or emanation from himself, and he proves it by asserting, that this doctrine contains no manner of absurdity nor contradiction in it. This was more easily asserted than proved, some persons would say. But besides, is it agreeable to reason to believe a proposition true, merely because it does not manifestly imply contradiction? Is every thing, that is possible, probable: or is it reasonable to believe, on the probability that a revelation is a true revelation, any thing that may be possibly not inconsistent with the perfections of the divine nature, but that seems to be so in probable opinion? It is said, that the wisest and most learned of the antient

* Dr. Delany.

philoſophers received and taught ſome doctrines..... as difficult to comprehend, as any thing in this article of the chriſtian faith, and that theſe men would not have made any objection to it on this account. Agreed. How then does the argument ſtand? Reduce it to its juſt value, and it ſtands thus. The heathen philoſophers taught many doctrines as incomprehenſible as this, without any pretence of a divine authority; and their own wild hypotheſes would have conducted them readily to receive this, on the authority of a revelation: it is, therefore, agreeable to ſound unprejudiced reaſon that we, who know how fantaſtical their whole theology was, ſhould follow the example which it is aſſumed they would have ſet us, and believe, without any of their prejudices, what they might have been induced, by theſe very prejudices, to believe. This doctrine of the logos or nous was taught in ſome of the egyptian, and other ſchools of eaſtern divinity; and we are not to wonder if PLATO, who had it from them, ſpoke obſcurely, or underſtood little concerning it, ſince it is not diſcoverable by bare reaſon. But, I think that PLATO would not have been more willing than ARIUS, or CLARKE himſelf to ſubſcribe to the athanaſian creed. He would have aſſented perhaps, as much as he aſſented in other caſes, to a coevality of the ſon with the father, as the eternal effect of an eternal cauſe. But he would not have aſſented to their coequality. He aſſumed that the ſon and the ſpirit are diſtinct ſubordinate beings, and no more coequal with the one Supreme Being, in the order of nature, than the world was thought to be by ARISTOTLE, and the philoſophers, who maintained the eternity of it.

ARCHBISHOP TILLOTSON's challenge to the ſocinians it is not to my purpoſe to examine; and I need ſay nothing of the holy ſpirit, ſince all that CLARKE ſays is, that the ſame which

which is said of the second may be understood very agreeably to right reason and with little variation, of the third.

That the account the Bible gives of a paradisiacal state, of the loss of it by sin, and of the consequences of this loss, are exactly consonant to the dictates of sound reason *, or the unprejudiced light of nature, and most wisely perfective of it (for thus far his undertaking goes) it behoved him to make out very clearly; because if the redemption be, as he owns it is †, the main and fundamental article of the christian faith, sure I am, that the account of the fall of man is the foundation of this fundamental article. He should have labored this point the rather, since it is, in all it's circumstances, absolutely irreconcileable to every idea we can frame of wisdom, justice and goodness, to say nothing of the dignity of the Supreme Being, who is introduced so familiarly, and employed so indecently, in taking the cool air, in making coats of skins, to serve instead of aprons of fig leaves which Adam and Eve had sewed together, and not only in cursing the serpent, and them, and their whole posterity, and the world itself for their sakes, but in joking most cruelly on them; for the twenty-second verse of the third chapter of Genesis is allowed to be an holy irony or sarcasm by that learned divine, Mathew Poole. Instead of proving any part of this to be agreeable to sound reason, and the unprejudiced light of nature, Clarke passes over the whole, as very reasonable and credible in itself, which it appears to be, he says, not only from the abstract consideration of the nature of the thing ‖, but also from the general opinion of the heathens, that the original state of man was innocent and simple, till God, for the sins of men, changed this happy constitution of things.

* Evid. p. 239. † Ib. p. 262. ‖ Ib. p. 255.

In the name of God, is this to prove? Do men, who prove no better, deſerve an anſwer, how much reputation ſoever they may have acquired? Their adverſaries deny, and have attempted to ſhew, that this account of the fall of man is unreaſonable, and incredible, in every conſideration, abſtract, or particular. This champion in demonſtration ſays, it is very reaſonable and credible from the abſtract conſideration of the thing. He ſays no more. He begs the queſtion, therefore, ſhamefully, on the very point in diſpute, and which he undertook to maintain. The heathen, the moſt antient and learned of them, are again brought in to no purpoſe whatever; ſince if they had all agreed, in ſome general and obſcure tradition of this ſort, it would avail little, as to the reaſonableneſs and credibility of this change in the conſtitution of things, and nothing as to the particular circumſtances, which are made the angular ſtones of the whole fabric of chriſtianity. One cannot conſider the uſe which CLARKE makes, ſo frequently, and to ſo little purpoſe, of the heathen philoſophers without laughing, as CALANUS, the doctor's voucher on this occaſion, laughed at the dreſs of ONESICRITUS, when he bid him ſtrip and lye down naked on the ſtones by him *. The mad gymnoſophiſt had begun, whilſt he laughed, to tell the meſſenger of ALEXANDER, as a ſample of his wiſdom, how fertile the world was in antient times, how the fountains ran with milk, with water, with honey, with wine and with oil; how JUPITER had deſtroyed this conſtitution of things †, for the iniquity of men, who abuſed his goodneſs; and had obliged them to live by their labor; how it had been reſtored again on their reformation, and what danger there was, now they had re-

* Strabo l. 15.

† .... ob ſatietatem et luxuriam ad contumeliam ſe tranſdiderunt.

lapſed

lapſed into almoſt the ſame iniquity, that the end of all things ſhould be at hand. He would have proceeded, no doubt, in much the ſame ſtyle, if MANDANIS, the head of the order, had not impoſed ſilence on him, and, calling ONESICRITUS to himſelf from CALANUS, had not talked with great decency and good ſenſe, in a manner, and on ſubjects proper for the greek to report to his prince. Thus the hiſtory of the fall, and all the circumſtances of it are proved reaſonable and probable.

XXXVII.

OUR author takes a little more pains to ſhew, that the doctrine of the redemption of mankind is agreeable to reaſon. Having aſſumed, which he calls proving, that the moral attributes of GOD, and the notions and expectations of ſome wiſe men among the heathens, make it reaſonable to believe GOD did make, ſeventeen hundred years ago, a revelation of his will to mankind, as if mankind ſtood in more need of a revelation four thouſand years after their race began, than at any other period; as if the moral attributes of GOD were not the ſame, four thouſand years before, when he made the firſt revelation of his will, in the conſtitution of nature; and finally, as if the notions and expectations of SOCRATES and PLATO, ſuppoſing theſe philoſophers to have had them really, proved any thing more than their deſire of more knowledge than GOD thought proper to give them the means of acquiring; having aſſumed all this, I ſay, he proceeds to argue in this manner*. Some ſacrifice or expiation for ſin was neceſſary to be appointed, "to ſhew GOD's irreconcileable

* Evid. p. 263 et ſequ.

"hatred

" hatred to it. Repentance might not be ſufficient. God " would not be appeaſed without ſome puniſhment and ſa- " tisfaction; and yet he would accept ſome other than the " deſtruction of offenders. This appears, in the cuſtom of " ſacrificing, to have been the univerſal apprehenſion of " mankind:" and, from this univerſal apprehenſion, he concludes, that " the doctrine of the redemption is plainly " agreeable to right reaſon." Thus are theſe great maſters of reaſon reduced to propoſe the moſt groſs abuſes for the true dictates of it. Thus are the moſt abſurd notions which ſuperſtition ever ſpread, in contradiction to the law of nature and reaſon, applied to the proceedings of God with man; made the meaſure of divine juſtice by philoſophers who determine and define the moral attributes of the deity; and eſtabliſhed as foundations of the chriſtian ſyſtem, by divines who pretend, and who are hired, to defend it. Notions which directed a principal part of idolatrous worſhip are ſanctified, and the moſt inhuman rites are rendered the moſt meritorious; for if it was agreeable to ſound reaſon, to think that God would not be appeaſed unleſs ſome blood was ſpilled, he who ſhed that of beaſts to expiate ſins did well, but he who ſhed that of his children did better. He brought the puniſhment nearer to himſelf: and the Phenician had the advantage, in this reſpect, of the Iſraelite. He erred, whatever he ſacrificed, by the miſapplication of a true principle, when he ſacrificed to Moloch. But the Iſraelite, who did not miſapply the principle, would have purſued it more agreeably to ſound reaſon, and the unprejudiced light of nature, if he had ſacrificed his ſon, as Abraham was ready to do, or his daughter like Jephthah. God was pleaſed to accept of an expiation that coſt offenders leſs to make, under the moſaical diſpenſation, as the ſcriptures tell us. But the ſame ſcriptures prove evidently, that the reaſon of the thing

goes as far as I carry it; since, under the christian dispensation, God caused the expiation for sin to be made by the sufferings and death of his own Son; than which nothing can be imagined, as Clarke * assures us, more honorable and worthy of the Supreme Lord and Governor of all things.

We weigh these matters in the ballance of human reason, to which the appeal is made, if men who decide can be said to appeal, even tho' they affirm that God condescends to do so. They are refuted, therefore, if they have not reason, as well as revelation, on their side: and the charge of weakening the cause of the latter, whilst they presume to defend it by the former, is made out against them. Let us proceed, with a due respect for revelation, and with no more than it deserves for their reasoning.

I say then, tho' we should allow men were in the right to think universally that God exacted some bloody expiation for sin, and that repentance, which the law of nature points out, was not sufficient; yet even this concession would not justify the doctrine of the redemption of mankind at the bar of reason. The heathens thought, that the sacrifice of an ox, or a son, or a daughter, would atone for sins. Therefore, it is plainly agreeable to the universal reason of mankind, signified by this universal apprehension, to believe that God sent his only begotten Son, who had not offended him, to be sacrificed by men, who had offended him, that he might expiate their sins, and satisfy his own anger. Surely our ideas of moral attributes will lead us to think, that God would have been satisfied, more agreeably to his mercy and goodness, without any expiation, upon the repentance of the offenders, and

* Ib. p. 268.

more

more agreeably to his juſtice with any other expiation rather than with this. The heathen divines were accuſtomed to think and ſpeak of their gods much after the manner of men. If one of them, therefore, had ariſen from the dead, he would have concurred readily with CLARKE in the maxim, that the moral attributes are the ſame in the divine nature, as they are in our ideas. But then, he would have challenged the doctor to produce an example, in the pagan ſyſtem, of a god ſacrificing his ſon to appeaſe himſelf, any more than of a god who was himſelf his own father and his own ſon. SATURN, he might ſay, did indeed offer up his ſon in ſacrifice: but he did it to appeaſe COELUS, not himſelf.

WHEN our divine is about to eſtabliſh, "that there is a fit-"neſs and unfitneſs of certain circumſtances to certain perſons "founded in the nature of things, and in the qualifications of "perſons; he ſays, that this muſt be acknowledged by every "one who will not affirm that it is equally fit . . . that an inno-"cent being ſhould be extremely and eternally miſerable, as that "it ſhould be free from ſuch miſery". The propoſition is true without diſpute, tho' it is not true that we can always diſcern this fitneſs and unfitneſs. Let us join iſſue with the learned perſon here, and add, to ſtrengthen the maxim, that there is the ſame unfitneſs, in the caſe ſuppoſed, whether the miſery be aſſumed external, or not. Let us aſk now, whether the truth of this maxim, the innocence of the Lamb of GOD, and the ſufferings and ignominious death of CHRIST, can be reconciled together, and how? The niceſt caſuiſt would, I think, be puzzled; but our caſuiſt goes on moſt dogmatically, and ſhews no more regard to the dignity than to the innocence of the divine perſon who died on the croſs. He does, indeed, allow that no one can certainly ſay, that GOD might not have pardoned ſin upon repentance without any ſacrifice. But he

pronounces this method of doing it, by the death of CHRIST, to be more wise and fit for several prudential reasons. Read them, they would appear futile and impertinent if applied to human councils; but in their application to the divine councils they become prophane and impious. Nay, it would not be hard to shew, that this method was more proper to produce a contrary effect, than that which is assigned as a reason for taking it. For instance, the death of CHRIST, it is said, was proper to discountenance presumption, and to discourage men from repeating their transgressions. Surely, it would not be hard to shew by reason, that the death of CHRIST might, and by fact, that it has countenanced presumption without discouraging men from repeating their transgressions. But I shall not descend into particulars that are trifling and tedious, and that would render a full answer to them little better. A general reflection, or two, may serve, and are as much as they all deserve.

THO' I am far from approving the practice of those who compare so frequently the divine with the human œconomy and policy, and who build on the last their hypothetical schemes of the first; yet on this occasion, and to frame an argument ad hominem, it may be properly done. Let us suppose then, a great prince governing a wicked and rebellious people. He has it in his power to punish, he thinks fit to pardon them. But he orders his only and beloved son to be put to death to expiate their sins, and to satisfy his royal vengeance. Would this proceeding appear to the eye of reason, and in the unprejudiced light of nature, wise, or just, or good? No man dares to say that it would, except he be a divine; for CLARKE does in effect say that it would; since he imputes this very proceeding to GOD, and justifies it not implicitly on the authority of revelation, but explicitly on the

authority of reaſon, which may be applied to man as well as to GOD, and as a particular inſtance of the general rule that is, according to him, common to both. Allow me one reflection more.

CLARKE acknowledges readily, that human reaſon could never have diſcovered ſuch a method as this for the reconciliation of ſinners to an offended GOD. But if reaſon could not have diſcovered it, how comes it to paſs that reaſon finds no ſuch difficulty nor inconceivableneſs in it, as to make a wiſe man call the truth of it in queſtion? the truth of a well-atteſted revelation, he ſays. But here he plays the ſophiſt. He is to prove the method agreeable to ſound unprejudiced reaſon, independently of revelation. No matter how it came to be known, is it reaſonable, is it agreeable to a fitneſs, founded in the nature of things, and in the qualifications of perſons? That is the point to be conſidered. To conſider it as reaſonable relatively to the revelation of it, is not to appeal to unprejudiced, but to prejudiced reaſon. It is in plain terms to beg the queſtion ſhamefully. Heathen theology was licentious enough in all conſcience. The profeſſors of it gave an extravagant looſe to their imaginations, paſſed all the bounds of probability, and ſcarce kept within thoſe of conceivable poſſibility. Thus they came very near to ſuch a ſyſtem as this: ſo near, that there was little more to be added, but this little, they did not think ſo highly of the human, and ſo lowly of the divine nature, as was neceſſary to make them add it. ÆSCULAPIUS came down from heaven, converſed in a viſible form with men, and taught them the art of healing diſeaſes*. The paſſage is cited from JULIAN by CLARKE, in order to ſhew, according to his laudable cuſtom, that there is nothing

* Ib. 268.

in

in the chriſtian ſyſtem which we may not believe on grounds of reaſon; becauſe there is nothing in it more incredible than what the leaſt reaſonable men that ever were, wild metaphyſicians, heathens, heretics, apoſtates, have believed. It may be cited more properly to ſhew, what I mean to ſhew by it, how eaſy and ſhort a tranſition might have been made by heathen divines, in the rage that poſſeſſed them all of framing complete ſchemes of the whole order and ſtate of things, from a god teaching phyſic to a god teaching theology. The moſt ignorant and ſavage of them, like the Phœnicians and the Carthaginians, who have been already mentioned, for they were all ſuperſtitious alike, came a little nearer to the doctrine of redemption. But even they did not come up to it entirely. They meaned to encourage the pious practice of ſacrificing their children; for pious it was on the principle of expiation by ſhedding of blood: but there was a great difference between the conceptions they had of their gods, and thoſe which chriſtians have of the Father and the Son. Their gods had been men, and SATURN was a man when he ſacrificed his ſon. Their ideas of human government led them to notions of divine mediations, and of expiations by ſhedding of blood, which were ſo many particular redemptions. But nothing in the reaſon of the thing, nor in the moſt ſuperſtitious of their prejudices, could lead them to imagine ſo much rigor in one god, as to exact that another ſhould be ſacrificed even by men who meaned no expiation, and in whom it was a murder, not a ſacrifice; nor ſo much humility and condeſcenſion in another as to make him ſubmit to be this divine victim. They could not imagine any thing ſo repugnant as this to all their ideas of order, of juſtice, of goodneſs, and in ſhort, of theiſm; tho' they imagined many other things that were really inconſiſtent with all theſe ideas. Thoſe of them, therefore, who embraced this doctrine, after it had been revealed, em-

braced it, not becauſe they found no difficulty nor inconceivableneſs in it, which CLARKE was to prove by proving it agreeable to ſound reaſon, but merely becauſe it was a part of a relation they believed true, for reaſons of another kind; which is nothing to his purpoſe under this head of argument.

XXXVIII.

ALL that he ſays more than I have obſerved upon it; all that follows about the importance of this world of ours, which it is aſſumed was made for the ſake of man, and which, we are told, is as conſiderable and worthy of the divine care as moſt other parts of our ſyſtem, which is likewiſe as conſiderable as any other ſingle ſyſtem in the univerſe, in order to take off the objection ariſing from the meanneſs of the creature; and finally all that follows about the manifeſtations of GOD, and the diſcoveries of his will, ſuppoſed to have been made by the ſame divine Logos to other beings in other ſyſtems, in order to take off the imputation of partiality from the Creator; all this, I ſay, is a rhapſody of preſumptuous reaſoning, of prophane abſurdities diſguiſed by epithets, of evaſions that ſeem to anſwer whilſt they only perplex, and in one word of the moſt arbitrary and leaſt reaſonable ſuppoſitions. I will bring but one inſtance more of the excellent manner in which the author of the Evidences proves, that all things neceſſary to be believed, in order to ſalvation, or cloſely connected with theſe, are moſt agreeable to ſound unprejudiced reaſon. He propoſes * the objection drawn from the want of univerſality to the chriſtian revelation. He had pro-

* Ib. p. 215, 216, 217, et 273.

poſed

poſed it before out of the oracles of reaſon, and his anſwer in both places is the ſame. It had been urged that no revelations, no inſtituted religions, had been univerſally received at any time, and by all nations; and that chriſtianity is in the ſame caſe with the reſt; that the ſon of GOD did not appear, till the latter ages of the world; and that ſince he did appear, his goſpel has not been received univerſally, and even his appearance has not been known to a great number of nations. The doctor does not undertake to ſhew how men may receive the benefits of a revelation of which they never heard, tho' that ſeems to be his opinion. But he inſiſts triumphantly, that the ſame objection will lye againſt natural religion, and boaſts again that he can force the objector into abſolute atheiſm. He boaſts, like a bully who looks fierce, ſpeaks big, and is little to be feared; for there is no ſufficient parity between the two caſes, and his reaſon is, on this occaſion, as harmleſs as the other's ſword. To affirm that natural and revealed religion are alike unknown in any parts of the world, is to affirm an untruth. That all men have not the ſame capacities and opportunities of underſtanding the obligations of natural religion, is true, but proves nothing.

Go to any of thoſe people whom we call barbarous, and who ſeem of all human creatures to have improved their reaſon the leaſt, you will find the light of nature, tho' not the light of the goſpel ſhining, faintly indeed, but ſhining among them; ſome rules of moral life, ſome laws for the maintainance of ſociety, ſome awe and reverence of a Being ſuperior to man, ſome reward for virtue, ſome puniſhment for vice. The religion of nature is known and improved more or leſs according to the different opportunities which men have, in proportion to their different capacities, and perhaps to the different degrees in which they participate of one

one common nature. But it is known and obſerved more or leſs every where. Nay, there has been often occaſion to wiſh that the ſame moderation and innocence, which prevailed in ignorant nations, had been found in thoſe, who are more improved in learning and civility; and that the knowledge of virtue had been of greater advantage to natural religion than the ignorance of vice *.

Is this now the caſe of the chriſtian religion? How many nations, civilized as well as barbarous, have there been, how many are there ſtill, by whom theſe tydings of good news, have been never heard, nor even the leaſt rumor of them? How many others to whom they have been carried, and who have refuſed to hear them, or hearing to believe them? All the truths of natural religion are diſcoverable, it is allowed on all hands, by the due uſe of reaſon alone; and GOD has left them to be ſo diſcovered: for tho' he has not given the ſame capacity to all men in any caſe, he has given the ſame means to all men in this caſe. If natural religion is diſcoverable by all men, revealed religion is ſo by none: and the divine muſt have very little regard to conſiſtency, when he objects that GOD has not given to ſome the ſame capacity of making and improving this diſcovery, as he has given to others: ſince it is his own doctrine that in thoſe countries where chriſtianity has been preached, ſome have believed and ſome have not believed, according to the different meaſures of grace, which is the free gift of GOD, beſtowed upon them.

BUT to carry this matter beyond the power of ſophiſm, and every polemical artifice; let us ſuppoſe whole nations as

* . . . . . Utinam reliquis mortalibus ſimilis moderatio et abſtinentia alieni foret. Tantum plus in illis proficit vitiorum ignoratio, quam in his (nempe Græcis) cognitio virtutis. JUSTIN Lib. 2. C. 2. ſpeaking of the Scythians.

ignorant

ignorant of natural religion as their bears and their wolves. Natural religion would be ſtill the ſame and of the ſame authority. It would be the religion of reaſonable nature, and obligatory on all who had ſuch a nature. One part of CLARKE's reaſonings, which he ſuppoſes falſely to be alike applicable both to that and to the chriſtian religion, would be well applied in favor of it. They who were endowed with rationality might ſay with ſound reaſon and the unprejudited light of nature on their ſide, "GOD is not obliged to "make all his creatures, even all thoſe that are in ap- "pearance of the ſame ſpecies, equal: and to aſſert, that "he is, would be a prophane diminution of his ſovereignty. "Let us be thankful for the means he has given us, of im- "proving our knowledge and our happineſs. That he has "not given them to other creatures, would be a ſtrange "reaſon for not improving them ourſelves." They, who were not endowed with ſo much rationality, would have no more moral obligations incumbent on them than their bears and their wolves. Is this plea now applicable to the want of univerſality, objected to the chriſtian revelation? It cannot be ſaid without equal abſurdity and effrontery. But they, to whom the terms of the chriſtian religion were communicated, might ſay, with ſound reaſon and the unprejudiced light of nature on their ſide, that theſe terms would have been communicated to all mankind alike, if the revelation had been from GOD; ſince all mankind were alike obliged to them, and ſince they, to whom theſe terms had not been communicated, would die, and might be damned in their involuntary ignorance of them. Thus their faith would be ſhocked, or if it was not, if they worked out their ſalvation with fear and trembling, the fate of the others would continue to be, what they pronounced it, moſt undeſervedly miſerable.

This needs little explanation; but to prevent all cavil, and to ſhew with greater evidence how inconſequently Clarke argues, and would argue, even if natural religion wanted univerſality, as much, and in as abſolute a manner as he ſuppoſes, and as in fact the chriſtian religion wants it, let us deſcend into a more particular compariſon. In one caſe then, God would have placed his human creatures in very different circumſtances, indeed; but the religion of reaſon obliges us to think that his proceedings towards them would have been proportioned to theſe circumſtances. In the other caſe, and according to the chriſtian revelation, he has, for the ſake of one man's offence, reduced all mankind to the ſame deplorable circumſtances. It is true, that he ſent his ſon, forty centuries afterwards, to redeem them from the conſequences of this ſituation; but the condition was that they believed in his ſon; "for there is no name under heaven by "which we can be ſaved but the name of the man Christ "Jesus" They are condemned without any fault of theirs: one ſole and uniform condition of ſaving themſelves is impoſed on all of them, and the greateſt part are deprived even of the knowledge of this condition. It will be ſaid, perhaps, which has been hinted already, that as the death of Christ had a retroactive effect on thoſe that lived and died before they were redeemed, ſo it may be beneficial to thoſe who never heard of it ſince. But theſe are the hypotheſes of theology and ſurmiſes of divines, not the expreſs and clear doctrines of chriſtianity. Nay, the divines, who held ſo charitable an opinion, would be oppoſed by other divines. St. Thomas is pleaſed, notwithſtanding this text, to ſave ſome of the heathens by a diſtinction between implicit and explicit faith, and by aſſuming that the firſt might be a ſaving faith to thoſe who lived before the promulgation of the

goſpel. But he is not ſo gracious to thoſe who have lived ſince that time. Since the goſpel was promulgated, nothing leſs than explicit faith will do: and he damns all thoſe who have it not, whether they ever heard of CHRIST or no, moſt arbitrarily and moſt inconſiſtently. To conclude; there is no parity between the two caſes. The firſt is agreeable to all our ideas of juſtice and goodneſs, as well as of ſovereignty and order. But no ſubtilty whatever can reconcile the laſt to any ideas, except thoſe of caprice, injuſtice, cruelty and tyranny.

WHAT ſhall we ſay now? Is the cauſe of chriſtianity too bad to be defended? Or is it defended booty? I think neither. I have too much reſpect for revelation to think one, and too much charity for the leaſt charitable men alive to think the other. A preſumptuous habit of reaſoning, and the phrenzy of metaphyſics are to be charged alone. It would paſs for down-right madneſs, if we were not accuſtomed to it, and if the practice of great and good men did not authoriſe it in common opinion, to hear a creature, placed in the loweſt form of intelligent beings, undertake to penetrate the deſigns, to fathom the depths, and to unveil the myſteries of infinite wiſdom, which the moſt exalted of created intelligencies would adore in ſilence. When the tradition was recent, and the proofs irrefragable of all the facts on which the authority of chriſtian revelation is, and can be alone properly founded; the fathers of the church might have ſtopped the mouths of all pretenders to reaſon by refuſing to reaſon about a revelation already proved to be divine; by inſiſting that every thing neceſſary to be known, was clearly and fully revealed, and that myſteries were recorded to exerciſe our faith, not our ſpeculations, nor our logic. If they had not gone off this rock, in compliance with the philoſophical mode of the age, and

with the vanity of their own hearts, they could not have been forced from it. But when they had once engaged in platonic and ariſtotelical reaſonings about chriſtian myſteries, it was too late to go back. They might cry as loudly as they pleaſed, which they always did when they were pinched, that the judgments and ways of God were acatalepta, incomprehenſible; but this cry came with an ill grace from them. It could have no effect on their adverſaries. They might have made it a cry of triumph. They made it little better than a confeſſion of defeat: and ſuch it has continued ever ſince.

XXXIX.

IF I intended to proceed any further than Clarke leads me on this occaſion, I might conſider in many more inſtances, taken from the writings of other divines, and of the fathers of the church, the manner in which they employ reaſon to account for revelation, ſometimes literally, ſometimes allegorically, always preſumptuouſly, often ridiculouſly. To collect all the prophane nonſenſe that has been broached about Eve and the ſerpent, about the trees of life and knowledge, and about other circumſtances of the creation and fall of man, which the curioſity of the woman, the wiles of the ſerpent, and the uxorious complaiſance of Adam effected, would be to collect an immenſe volume of all that has been writ on theſe ſubjects by Jews and chriſtians; for all that has been writ upon them is alike abſurd. To run through all thoſe paſſages of the Old Teſtament, which are leſſons of public and private immorality, of immodeſty to women, and of ſanguinary ferocity to men, which leave us no room to be ſurpriſed when we hear that there were certain heretics, who thought the God of the Old Teſtament was not the God of the New, and which ſhew that

that they who compiled the written law, from ESDRAS to SIMON the Juſt, had as little diſcernment in the choice of their materials, as they who compiled the traditions of the oral law afterwards; both of which demonſtrate that notions the moſt unworthy of GOD, and the moſt repugnant to the law of human nature, prevailed among the Jews in every age, tho' they were reconciled in their minds to ſome very ſublime ſentiments, and very true opinions; to run through all this, I ſay, would be not only tedious, but ſhocking to a man who conſidered theſe paſſages ſeriouſly, even to him, perhaps, who had heard them read ſolemnly a thouſand times in his pariſh-church without being offended at them. Such is the force of habit which familiariſes the groſſeſt abſurdities to our reaſon, as it does the moſt diſagreeable ſenſations to our ſenſes.

TYPES, and figures, and prophecies, are ſubjects on which the acute wits of divines have been much exerciſed, in order to ſhew a connection between the Old Teſtament and the New, and how one prepares us for and foretells the other. I ſhall deſcend into few particulars concerning them. There is no room for reaſoning about the two former. Their propriety or impropriety, aptneſs or unaptneſs, muſt appear to the underſtanding as ſoon as they are compared with the things typified or figured. Thus, for example, and to mention no other, when St. AUSTIN * tells us, that the ark being made of wood, and having a length, an heighth and breadth, which anſwer to the proportions of the human body, and, therefore, ſignify a human body, it is plain that this veſſel prefigured the city of GOD, or the church, which is ſaved by that wood, on which

* Menſura ipſa longitudinis, altitudinis, latitudiniſque ejus ſignificat corpus humanum .... quæ ſit ſalva per lignum in quo pependit .... homo JESUS CHRISTUS. Prænunciatus eſt venturus, et venit. de Civ. Dei. L. 15.

the man JESUS CHRIST was hanged up; that his coming was foretold, and he came; the impropriety and unaptneſs of this type or figure muſt ſtrike you on the very firſt reflection.

MORE reaſoning and a longer proceſs of examination are neceſſary when prophecies are concerned. The meaning of them is always equivocal and obſcure, and it may be doubtful ſometimes whether things were done, or recorded to be done, becauſe they had been, or ſeemed to have been foretold; or whether they had been foretold, becauſe they were to come to paſs. Of prophecies we have ſtore, both of ſuch as are applied to the Meſſiah, of ſuch as foretold what was to happen immediately to him, and to Jeruſalem, and of ſuch as remain and muſt remain, till the conſummation of all things, unaccompliſhed. I ſhall not ſet my feet into this labyrinth, where nothing certain is to be found, and from whence it is not eaſy to get out. I ſhall be content to obſerve that many queſtions are unreſolved, many difficulties unremoved, concerning the firſt kind of prophecies; and that men, even inſpired men, have thought ſometimes that they diſcovered prophecies, when they made them, and made them ſuch as could not be maintained with all the learning and all the ſubtilty they have beſtowed about them. It was for this reaſon, I ſuppoſe, that CLARKE omitted modeſtly the famous prophecy, "a virgin ſhall conceive and bear a ſon," in the place where he enumerates thoſe that foretold the Meſſiah; tho' he was ſanguine enough to inſiſt on ſome of no leſs difficult application; as that "the ſceptre ſhall not depart from Judah till SHILOH comes;" and on others that have had no accompliſhment, as that in the Pſalms, that God would "give him the heathen "for his inheritance, and the utmoſt parts of the earth for his "poſſeſſion," which is become by the event more applicable to FOE or MAHOMET, than to the true Meſſiah.

It may not be out of our way to obſerve here, that as the vague undetermined ſenſe, and the ambiguous dark expreſſion of the Bible have led ſacred writers and others to ſuppoſe prophecies, applicable to CHRIST, where none ſuch were intended; ſo the mahometan doctors have taken this advantage to aſſume that their falſe prophet is plainly promiſed, both in the old and new covenant. They quote the text in Deuteronomy, where it is ſaid, that the Lord came, or manifeſted himſelf, from Sinai, and roſe up from Seir *, that he ſhined forth from mount Paran. In this paſſage they find the law given to MOSES, the Goſpel to JESUS CHRIST, and the Koran to MAHOMET; and this they ſupport by topographical proofs. Seir is, according to them, that extent of hills, which run from the Red to the Dead Sea, cloſe to Jeruſalem. Paran is that mountain in the deſart of Arabia, near to Mecca, where MAHOMET received the firſt chapters of his impertinent book. I wonder theſe commentators have not obſerved further, that from the Lord's right hand there went a fiery law for them. This epithet could never be more properly applied. Your HOMER alludes to fire in his deſcriptions of battles. The devaſtations of war are compared by other poets to thoſe of fire; and the mahometan law might be called fiery at leaſt, as well as the moſaical. Theſe doctors bring two other quotations from the Pſalms. The firſt is in our tranſlation, Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, GOD has ſhined †. In the ſyriac they ſay, it is GOD hath made a crown of glory to ſhine out of Zion; and they add, that the words, rendered crown of glory, are in the original Hilan Mahmudan, by which the paſſage would be made to ſignify, GOD has ſent the domination of MAHOMET with ſplender out of Zion. The ſecond is taken

* C. 33. v. 2. † Pſ. 50. v. 2.

from

from the Pſalm, which is called the Pſalm of SOLOMON *, and which deſcribes in the future tenſe all the glories of his reign. This our divines agree, to be ſo; but having aſſumed, no one knows why, that SOLOMON was a type of the Meſſiah, they aſſert, that the prophecy looks forward to the ſpiritual reign of CHRIST, and that ſometimes one and ſometimes the other is meaned, with a ſtrange confuſion of images. The mahometan doctors fix the ſenſe of it by aſſerting, againſt Jews and chriſtians both, that the arabic verſion employs the proper and uſual word Medina, where it is ſaid, that they of the city ſhall floriſh like graſs of the earth: after which they aſk, with an air of triumph, what other prophet, beſides MAHOMET, ever came out of Medina, or even of Arabia? They go further, and they aſſume, that CHRIST himſelf foretold the coming of MAHOMET, when he ſaid, that, if he did not go, the Paraclet would not come; but that when he did go, he would ſend him †. They pretend, that this paſſage was ſtill more honorable for their prophet, that CHRIST ſpoke of himſelf in it as of the precurſor of MAHOMET, and that it has been corrupted. But ſtill the prophecy, they ſay, is ſufficiently clear, ſince Paraclet is in arabic Ahmed, and ſince Ahmed or Mahammed are the ſame.

ALL that has been ſaid concerning attempts to explain and enforce revelation by reaſon, relates to internal proofs, as they are called, of the divine original of the ſcriptures. CLARKE, whom I follow, does not think fit to inſiſt on any external proofs, on ſuch as might eſtabliſh beyond all reaſonable doubt the antiquity, the genuineneſs, and the authority of the books themſelves ‖: and yet the leaſt grain of ſuch proof as this would outweigh all the volumes of problema-

* Pſ. 72. † St. John 16. v. 12. ‖ Evid. p. 269.

tical

tical and futile reaſoning, that has been ſo tediouſly employed to give ſome color to the other. He refers us indeed to the collection that we find in GROTIUS * of many particulars contained in ſacred, and confirmed by prophane hiſtory. But GROTIUS and he ſhould have ſeen, that every one elſe would ſee the fallacy of this pretended proof. The concurrent teſtimony of cotemporary, diſintereſted and unprejudiced authors is, no doubt, a principal foundation of the credibility of any hiſtory: and ſuch a teſtimony theſe men would have it thought that they produce, when they quote, with much pomp, Egyptian, Phœnician, Chaldean, Indian, and Greek traditions and hiſtories. But none of theſe were of ſuch authority; or if the moſt ancient of them, ſuch as SANCHONIATHON for inſtance, and even others more modern, like BEROSUS, or ABYDENUS, or ERATOSTHENES, or MANETHO, were diſintereſted and unprejudiced in their hiſtory and chronology; yet it is certain that they, by whom alone theſe teſtimonies are conveyed to us, were ſo little of that character, JOSEPHUS and EUSEBIUS for inſtance, that their deſign in writing, however they blundered ſometimes in the execution of it, was to make prophane chronology and hiſtory appear conformable to thoſe of the Bible at any rate. That they did ſo, every ſcholar knows in ſome inſtances, which makes their authority juſtly precarious in every inſtance of this kind. But I am willing to ſuppoſe, that theſe impure channels are pure, and that they have conveyed theſe anecdotes down to us juſt as they ſtood in the antient books, from which they are ſaid to be taken. What will this conceſſion prove? It will prove, that there were various traditions, in a moſt remote antiquity, concerning the creation, the flood, and the deſtruction of Sodom, about ABRAHAM and other patriarchs,

* De Verit. Rel. Chriſt.

about DAVID and other kings of the Jews. It will ſhew, that the Phœnicians, the Egyptians, the Iſraelites, and probably every one of the eaſtern nations, had their ſyſtems of traditions, whereof that of the Old Teſtament alone is come down to us entire. The ſame names, and many circumſtances of the ſame events, muſt of courſe have been mentioned in all. But ſuch a conformity proves nothing. As they agreed in ſome, they might differ in other particulars: and the whole tenor of thoſe, that are loſt, might be repugnant to one another, and to that of the Jews. ABRAHAM was a name famous in all of them. ISAAC was known to the Arabians as well as ISMAEL, and ISMAEL to the Jews as well as ISAAC; but they tell very different ſtories about the legitimacy, and rank, and favor with GOD of the two brothers, as well as about the deſcent from them. In one of theſe, we find a genealogy down to CHRIST. In the other the Mahometans find a genealogy of all thoſe who were born with the ſigns of a prophet down to MAHOMET. I could ſet the fallacy of this ſort of proof, in general and in particular, as it is applied both to the Old Teſtament and to the New, in a ſtronger light; if I did not haſten back from this digreſſion to that which is more immediately my ſubject, in order to ſhew you a further abuſe of this manner of reaſoning, on which the abſurd pile of artificial theology has been erected, and is ſupported. The abuſe, I mean, is that whereby divines admit the firſt, the moſt plauſible and the ſtrongeſt objection that atheiſm ever made to the exiſtence of GOD; form a ſort of partial alliance with the profeſſors of it, and aſſiſt them in undermining the fundamental article of all religion, which they hope vainly to maintain afterwards by the help of a few hypothetical props. This abuſe does not ariſe ſolely from the preſumption which has been ſpoken of, the preſumption of thoſe who think, that the chriſtian revelation wants to lean on human reaſon, and to be explained

explained and enforced by it; but from a falſe reaſoning, in which philoſophers have indulged their pride, and their curioſity, ever ſince there was ſuch a thing as philoſophy in the world. Let us deſcend into a particular conſideration of this matter, and ſpeak of it a little at large.

XL.

AFTER pleading the cauſe of natural and revealed religion, I am now to plead that of GOD himſelf, if I may uſe the expreſſion of SENECA, in his treatiſe De Providentia, againſt divines and atheiſts in confederacy.

THAT chain of reaſoning by which we arrive, from a knowledge of the Phænomena, at a knowledge of the author of nature, of a firſt intelligent cauſe of all things, ſelf-exiſtent and the fountain of all exiſtence, all-perfect, and the inimitable original of all perfections, has never been, and can never be broken. How ſhould reaſon diſſolve a demonſtration reaſon has made, by leading us from things perceived by ſenſe and by intuition to that exiſtence which cannot be ſo perceived *? The atheiſt cannot be ſaid properly to argue againſt the moſt evident, and, in my apprehenſion, the moſt comfortable truth, which human reaſon demonſtrates. All he can do is to cavil at it: and thus far the aſſociation, between him and the theiſt, has been carried too generally in all ages.

IGNORANCE that was real, and knowledge that was fantaſtic, ſuperſtition and philoſophy combined to create gods,

* Ratio quæ ex rebus perceptis ad id quod non percipiebatur aducit. Acad. Quæſt. L. 2.

whoſe exiſtence could not be demonſtrated. But theſe gods, theſe hypothetical deities, did not interfere with the one Supreme Being, even in the minds of thoſe who worſhipped them. " à rebus phyſicis tracta ratio ad commentitios et " fictos deos." Theſe were the moſt antient, and like the ſun, the firſt and principal objects of adoration. They were the dii majorum gentium. But they were viſible and generated gods, as they are called by PLATO: and however confuſedly this appellation was employed in common uſe, the Θεοὶ were always diſtinguiſhed from ὁ Θεὸς and τὸ Θεῖον. The TIMÆUS diſtinguiſhes them ſufficiently; and PROCLUS, in his comment upon it, where he mentions the doubts and diſputes that aroſe about the many, affirms that the belief of one GOD was uniform. Even they who believed ſome, of the many, eternal, believed them ſo by an eternal creation or proceſſion from the one, and if equal in time, yet not ſo in the order of nature and cauſality, nor ſelf-exiſtent. CELSUS was a ſtrenuous polytheiſt, and yet when he pleaded for the worſhip of dæmons, he aſſerted, " that the one true GOD is never to " be neglected, neither by day nor night, neither in public " nor private, neither in words nor actions; but that our " minds ought to be directed conſtantly to him." In ſhort, when the pagan theiſts were called upon to explain themſelves, they made a profeſſion of their faith, eaſily reconciled to true theiſm: and the fathers of the church, who rejected, like EUSEBIUS, theſe profeſſions as thoſe of men who only denied what they were ſhamed from owning by chriſtianity, had a very ill grace; ſince they themſelves were every day employed to explain and alter old doctrines by new, and were nurſing up a ſort of polytheiſm, which became little different from that of the pagans, and which needs, at this hour, as much indulgence to make it paſs for any thing elſe.

THAT

THAT there were ſome men who knew not GOD in all ages, may be true; but the ſcandalous taſk of combating his exiſtence, under the maſk of theiſm, was reſerved for metaphyſicians and theologians. It was undertaken probably as ſoon as philoſophers, who profeſſed ſuch ſciences, aroſe. It was undertaken certainly in an unknown antiquity; for as early as the moſt antient, and eſpecially the moſt learned nations appear to us, we ſee ſuch doctrines and inſtitutions eſtabliſhed as owe plainly their original to objections raiſed againſt the proceedings of divine providence. What were the OSIRIS and TYPHO of the Ægyptians, the OROMAZES and ARIMANIUS of the magi, the good and bad planets of the Chaldæans, the Zeus and Hades of the Greeks, the Monas and Dyas of PYTHAGORAS, the concord and diſcord or two principles of other philoſophers; what were all theſe but ſo many inventions, piouſly deſigned to account for the mixture of good and evil, that there is in the world? To account for the ſuppoſed unjuſt diſtribution of them, other expedients had been found. Beſides a metempſychoſis or tranſmigration of ſouls, from the bodies of men into thoſe of birds, beaſts, fiſhes, and after a revolution of many ages into the bodies of men again, the Ægyptians held an heaven and an hell, into one of which the good were to be received and to live with the gods, whilſt the wicked were tormented in the other. PYTHAGORAS and PLATO had learned this doctrine from them *. But the former thought to give it more weight by pretending to have gone in perſon to the infernal ſhades: and the latter quoted, for the ſame purpoſe, HERES of Pamphilia, who had been ſent from thence to relate what he had ſeen and heard there. It is worth while to mention the particulars related by him, in order to ſhew how much

* PLATO de Rep. L. 10.

the antient theiſts were perſuaded, that nothing leſs than the exiſtence of all mankind in a future ſtate, and a more exact diſtribution of rewards and puniſhments, could excuſe the aſſumed irregular and unjuſt proceedings of providence in this life, on which atheiſts founded an objection that the others admitted too eaſily. Æacus then, and Minos and Rhadamanthus ſat in judgment in the field of truth, "in campo "veritatis." All the ſouls of the dead were brought before this tribunal. There they were tried, and the ſeparation of the righteous from the wicked was made. The former were placed on the right hand, the latter on the left: the former went upwards to live with the gods in heaven, the latter downwards to live with the furies in hell. Of theſe, however, a diſtinction was made. Such ſouls as were judged curable, and required only a little more purification, the animæ ſanabiles, were delivered from hell after a year of ſuffering; and for this purpoſe a review of ſouls was made annually. Let me obſerve, by the way, that the doctrine of purgatory is plainly proved by this doctrine, according to Clarke's way of proving, and better than by a paſſage in one of the books of the Macchabees, to be agreeable to ſound reaſon and the unprejudiced light of nature in general: and that the particular circumſtance of an annual review of ſouls favors extremely a fact which the Franciſcan monks aſſerted, and the council of Baſle cenſured, the annual deſcent of their founder into purgatory; from whence he delivered, by a ſpecial privilege, and carried with him to heaven, the ſouls of all thoſe of his own order*. What uſe may be made of theſe obſervations, I leave it to you to determine. But I think, you will agree with me on the whole, that the cavils raiſed, on account

* Beatus Franciſcus ex divino privilegio quotannis ad purgatorium deſcendit, ſuoſque omnes ad cœlum deducit. Spond. an. 1443.

of

of phyſical and moral evil, are as old as metaphyſics and theology.

THEY who arrived by proofs, à poſteriori, at a demonſtration of GOD's exiſtence, might think, very rationally, that whatever diſcoveries they made further concerning his nature, his attributes and his will, muſt be made by the ſame means, and that what could not be ſo diſcovered, could not be diſcovered at all. Thus men of common ſenſe might think, and by proceeding in this method, they might be ſure of acquiring as much knowledge as they wanted, and be ſafe againſt falling into error; ſince to proceed in this method is to follow natural revelation, and inſtead of employing our reaſon about the ſuggeſtions of imagination, to employ her about thoſe of nature, which are the ſuggeſtions of GOD himſelf. But we may be aſſured, that there were, in thoſe days, as there are in ours, men of uncommon ſenſe, who ſetting themſelves far above the vulgar proceeded on a very vulgar principle, and made themſelves the meaſure of all Being, of the Supreme Being among the reſt. When modern divines tell us, that we are made after the image of GOD, they mean it with a regard to our intellectual ſyſtem, and they proceed in the very ſame manner with thoſe ancient divines who made GOD after their own image. To ſay the firſt is more decent, but the laſt is always done; for there can be no application from GOD, whom we do not know, to man. The application muſt be made, and it always is ſo, from man, whom we do know, to GOD.

WHEN we contemplate the works of GOD " . . . . cum ſu-
" ſpicimus magni cœleſtia mundi templa ſuper ſtelliſque mi-
" cantibus æthera fixum, et venit in mentem lunæ ſoliſque
" viarum; " they give us very clear and determined ideas of

of wiſdom and power, which we call infinite, becauſe they paſs, in the exerciſe of them, all the bounds of our conceptions. Thus far the reaſoner à poſteriori went formerly, and goes now; becauſe the phænomena conduct him thus far, and give him theſe ideas with an invariable uniformity. But the reaſoners à priori have been never thus confined. As ſoon as they had proved to themſelves the exiſtence of a firſt intelligent cauſe of all things, which can be proved by the other method alone, they abandoned it, and having aſſumed that divine and human intelligence are the ſame, in kind at leaſt, they proceeded in all their reaſonings about the nature, moral attributes, and will of GOD, not only without regard to the phænomena, but often in direct contradiction to them. In ſhort, no true theiſt ever aſſerted, with greater aſſurance, this undeniable truth, that every thing which GOD has done is for that very reaſon right, than theſe falſe theiſts have aſſerted the repugnancy of many things, in the conſtitution and government of the world, to the moral attributes, and even to the wiſdom of GOD. GOD is, in their notion of him, nothing more than an infinite man. He knows as we know, is wiſe as we are wiſe, and moral as we are moral: but his knowledge, his wiſdom, and his morality are in their nature infinite, tho' they are not exerciſed alike in the production of all the phænomena, nor with a conſtant harmony, nor conſiſtency.

XLI.

NO man has been more dogmatical on this head than CLARKE *. He is much ſcandalized at thoſe theiſts, among others, who being ſo abſurd as to imagine that good-

* Evid. p. 26.

neſs and juſtice are not the ſame in GOD, which they are in our ideas, but ſomething tranſcendent, think it is impoſſible we ſhould argue with any certainty about them. This opinion, he ſays, does not ſtand on any conſiſtent principles, and muſt finally recur to abſolute atheiſm. Now I own very freely, that the opinion is mine, and that it is one of thoſe which I think it impious to alter, "quæ deſeri à me, dum quidem "ſpirare potero, nefas judico." Far from apprehending, that I ſhall be reduced to atheiſm by holding it, the doctor ſeems to me in ſome danger of being reduced to manifeſt abſurdity by holding the contrary opinion.

AFTER repeating, over and over, of all the moral attributes, that they are the ſame in GOD as they are in our ideas, and that he who denies them to be ſo may as well deny the divine phyſical attributes, the doctor inſiſts only on two of the former, on thoſe of juſtice and goodneſs. He was much in the right to contract the generality of his aſſertion. The abſurdity of aſcribing temperance for inſtance, or fortitude to GOD, would have been too groſs, and too viſible even to eyes that prejudice had blinded the moſt. But that of aſcribing juſtice and goodneſs to him, according to our notions of them, might be better covered, and was enough for his purpoſe, tho' not leſs really abſurd.

IF juſtice and goodneſs be not the ſame in GOD as in our ideas*, then we mean nothing when we ſay, that GOD is neceſſarily juſt and good, and, for the ſame reaſon, it may as well be ſaid, that we know not what we mean, when we affirm, that he is an intelligent and wiſe Being. Theſe are the doctor's own words, and ſurely they ſhew, that great men, in com-

* Evid. ib.

mon

mon eſtimation, are ſometimes great triflers. When they, who are of his opinion, affirm, that GOD is neceſſarily juſt and good, according to their preciſe notions of juſtice and goodneſs, they know, indeed, what they mean, and they mean very preſumptuouſly. When they, who are not of his opinion, ſay, that GOD is juſt and good, they too have a meaning which is not leſs reaſonable for being more modeſt. They aſcribe all conceivable perfections to GOD, moral and phyſical, which can belong to a divine nature and to a Supreme Being; but they do not preſume to limit them to their conceptions, which is their crime with doctor CLARKE. Every thing ſhews the wiſdom and power of GOD, conformably to our ideas of wiſdom and power in the phyſical world and in the moral. But every thing does not ſhew, in like manner, the juſtice and goodneſs of GOD, conformably to our ideas of theſe attributes in either. The phyſical attributes are in their nature more glaring, and leſs equivocal. The divine and the atheiſt, therefore, deny that to be juſt or good, which is not one or the other according to their ideas. The theiſt acknowledges whatever GOD has done to be juſt and good in itſelf, tho' it does not appear ſuch in every inſtance, conformably to his ideas of juſtice and goodneſs. He imputes the difference to the defect of his ideas, and not to any defect of the divine attributes. Where he ſees them, he owns them explicitly: where he does not ſee them, he pronounces nothing about them. He is as far from denying them, as he is from denying the wiſdom and power of GOD. In every caſe he knows what he means, and his meaning is in every caſe rational, pious, and modeſt.

WILL the divine ſay, that he does not deny the juſtice and goodneſs of GOD, becauſe he proves them, in general, à priori; and that when he denies them in particular inſtances, he only

only denies the complete exercise of them in this world, because that is reserved for another? When he proves then the justice and goodness of God, he proves them as he could not prove even his intelligence, that is à priori: and when he denies them, his denial is absolute; unless an hypothesis, which may be denied on much better grounds, for we speak here of reason, not of revelation, be true. But what is this proof à priori? Does it prove that justice and goodness, tho' they are so connected with the physical attributes, that when we ascribe one we are obliged, by necessary consequence, to ascribe the other to the Supreme Being, are yet so distinct that they may be separated in the exercise of them, and that either of them may act as independently of his wisdom, as of one another? If this be said, they who say it may assume, in consequence, that the Supreme Being is sometimes partial, instead of being always just, and sometimes evil, instead of being always good; which hypothesis might have saved the ancients the trouble of inventing that of the two principles, and sets the reasoning of such a divine, as CLARKE, on principles as little consistent as that of an atheist. Does the argument à priori prove that the justice, and goodness, and wisdom, and power of GOD are so intimately connected, and are so much the same by nature, that they cannot be separated in the exercise of them? In this case, his natural attributes absorb the moral. The will of GOD is not determined, sometimes by one moral attribute, and sometimes by another, like that of man, but by a concurrence of them all with his wisdom in every act of it. GOD is then infinitely wise; he does always that which is fittest to be done. That, which is fittest to be done, is always just and good, and the dispute is over.

No, says the divine. However you distinguish, or however you blend the divine attributes, there is a rule, according to

which the exercise of these attributes is determined, and must be characterised. This rule is the reason of things, resulting from their eternal relations, which are such as they appear to be to the understandings of all intelligent beings. God appeals to this rule; we have a right to judge him by it: and therefore, when he appears neither just nor good à posteriori, tho' we know him to be so à priori, we must have recourse to some hypothesis or other, in order to reconcile the exercise of his attributes to this rule. "Quo teneam protea nodo?" It is hard to follow men, from supposition to suppositon, through all the mazes of metaphysical theology. There is no end of it neither: and if I shewed Clarke, that the understandings of all mankind, his own among the rest, are extremely apt to understand things to be what they are not, that they are imperfect and depraved *, and that his rule of judging God by man is, therefore, to the last degree impertinent, on this account, as well as on many others; if all this was shewn, I say, it would not serve to silence men, who seek nothing more than to maintain the honor of the gown by having the last word in every dispute. We shall do better, therefore, to go as far back as we can to the origin of this dispute, where we shall find, if I mistake not, that as it is carried on, so it was founded on a previous question or two, miserably begged on one side, and as foolishly granted on the other.

The argument, by which Epicurus endeavored to prove that there could be no God, since there was such a thing as evil in the world, is stated more strongly than it is refuted by Lactantius, in his book De irâ Dei. Au. Gellius quotes a passage of Q. Claudius the annalist, wherein the gods are

* Dem. p. 125.

condemned

condemned for their iniquitous distribution of good and evil †: and PLUTARCH introduces his dialogue, concerning the delay of divine justice in punishing the crimes of men, by supposing that EPICURUS, who was just gone out of the company, had poured forth a whole torrent of blasphemy against the providence of GOD, for this delay. In the third book of the Nature of the gods, all the powers of eloquence are called forth, in a sprightly declamation to exaggerate physical and moral evil, and to conclude as directly, as an academician could conclude, from their existence and from the assumed unjust dispensations of providence, that there is no GOD. These instances, to which I refer you, are sufficient. They are ancient themselves, and they are the copies of others much more antient. But as bold as the charge is, and as high as it was founded, the belief of GOD's existence could not have been shaken by it in the minds of men, nor could they have been reduced, as they have been from the most early ages, to defend a demonstrated truth by evasions, by sophisms, by hypotheses, and by all the low expedients that are employed to palliate error, if theists had not been seduced many ways into a confederacy with atheists.

THE case before us affords a signal example, the most signal that it is possible to imagine, of the danger we run, whenever we soar, in the vague of abstract reasoning, too far from the phænomena of our system. To be real, our knowledge must rise in it. To be useful, it must be applicable to it. But philosophers appear often, like comets, that rise out of our system, just cross it, disorder it, and go out of it again. The general observation has been inculcated throughout all I have

† Hæc maxime versatur deorum iniquitas, quod deteriores sint incolumiores, neque optimum quempiam internos sinunt diurnare. L. 17. C. 2.

written, and it has been juſt now applied, particularly to the proceeding of thoſe reaſoners à priori, who either became atheiſts themſelves, or who ſupported the cavils of thoſe who were ſuch, till theſe cavils became arguments founded on theiſtical principles, and therefore difficult, I might ſay impoſſible, for thoſe who had eſtabliſhed theſe principles, to anſwer. A ſelf-exiſtent Being, the firſt cauſe of all things, infinitely powerful, and infinitely wiſe, is the God of natural theology: and we may advance, without any fear of being diſproved, that as the whole ſyſtem of the univerſe bears teſtimony to this great truth, ſo the whole ſyſtem of natural religion reſts on it, and requires no broader foundation. Theſe ſyſtems are God's ſyſtems. That of our knowledge is given and limited, that of our duty is preſcribed and revealed by him. Both are adequate to one another; both are commenſurate: we have no knowledge beyond our duty, nor any duty beyond our knowledge.

What now has artificial theology pretended to add to that knowledge of the deity, which natural theology communicates? It pretends to connect, by very problematical reaſonings à priori, moral attributes, ſuch as we conceive them, and ſuch as they are relatively to us, with the phyſical attributes of God; tho' there be no ſufficient foundation for this proceeding in the phænomena of nature: nay, tho' the phænomena are, as it has been ſaid already, in ſeveral caſes repugnant. God is juſt, and good, and righteous, and holy, as well as powerful and wiſe. Man is made in the image of God: he is little lower than the angels, or inferior gods in the platonic ſcheme. Nay, he is ſuperior to them: there is no intermediate being between God and man in the ſtoical ſcheme. "Homini præſtare quis poſſit niſi Deus?" was the queſtion of Chrysippus: and Seneca aſſumes a friendſhip, a ne-

a neceſſary relation, a likeneſs between GOD and good men. The good man is the diſciple of GOD; he emulates GOD; he is the true offspring of GOD *.

SUCH were the notions of antient theiſts, and on ſuch notions it was natural for them to aſſume, that this world was made for man; and that the Supreme Being could have no other motive to make ſo noble a creature, except that of communicating happineſs to him. The atheiſts ſaw their advantage. They ſaw that artificial theology gave them the means of unravelling that thread, which natural theology had ſpun, and of playing the aſſumed, againſt the demonſtrated attributes. They might aſk, as they did, if GOD be good and holy, how comes it that there is any ſuch thing as evil in the world? If he be juſt and righteous, how comes it that the beſt men have often the greateſt ſhare of this evil? The pagan theiſts were extremely puzzled how to anſwer theſe queſtions, ſo as to prevent the concluſion, there is no GOD: and therefore they had recourſe generally to the hypotheſis of two coexiſting principles, and thought like PLUTARCH † that it was better to abridge the power of JUPITER, than to impute to him that he cauſed or ſuffered evil. When they had not this recourſe, they talked mere nonſenſe, figurative, ſublime, metaphyſical, but nonſenſe ſtill. The ſtoics, thoſe zealous aſſertors of the Supreme GOD, and defenders of his providence, had all a tang of enthuſiaſm, or they all affected it. DEMETRIUS was of the firſt ſort, no doubt: and ſo might SENECA be, who quotes him, and who took much pains to work himſelf, and his friend LUCILIUS, up

* . . . Amicitia eſt . . . . imo etiam neceſſitudo et ſimilitudo . . . . diſcipulus ejus, æmulatorque, et vera progenies. l. De provid.

† Adv. ſtoicos.

to

to the ſame temper of mind. At leaſt his treatiſe about providence is a rhapſody of paradox and enthuſiaſm, ingenious, affecting, and little to the purpoſe. I have quoted LACTANTIUS for the argument of EPICURUS *. I might quote him for ſuch an anſwer to it as deſerves to have it's place among the unexpected ſayings, the inopinata of the ſtoics, and no where elſe. GOD can, but he will not, according to this father, take away the evil that is in the world; becauſe if we did not know evil, we could not know good " .... niſi prius malum " agnoverimus nec bonum poterimus agnoſcere:" and becauſe there is much more advantage and pleaſure in the enjoyment of that wiſdom by which alone we know the latter than there is trouble and pain in the evil we ſuffer. " Plus, boni ac " jucunditatis in ſapientiâ quam in malis moleſtiæ." Thus the father proves, that all things were made for the ſake of man, evil as well as good. " Conſtat igitur omnia propter " hominem propoſita tam mala quam etiam bona."

THAT man is the final cauſe of the whole creation, and that GOD could have no other motive to make him, except that of communicating happineſs to him, are propoſitions aſſumed by all the antient and modern theiſts, thoſe of paganiſm and thoſe of chriſtianity. Love was the firſt or chief of the gods. Love was the firſt principle of things. Love of his creatures in idea determined GOD to draw them forth into exiſtence. That GOD loves us even to fondneſs, " uſque in " delicias amamur †," would ſuch a writer, as SENECA, ſay. That GOD loves us heartily, is the language of ſuch a writer as CLARKE. Such aſſumptions as have been mentioned, founded on ſuch notions as theſe, were inculcated in all ages by artificial theology, and could not fail to be ſo with ſucceſs; be-

* De ira Dei C. 13. † SEN. de Benef. L. 4.

cauſe

cauſe they flattered human nature, who is beſides her own flatterer and ſeducer. "Blanda adulatrix et quaſi lena ſui." The productions of infinite power were confined long to the ſyſtem of one planet alone, and the exerciſe of infinite wiſdom to the affairs of one animal chiefly. When further diſcoveries opened by degrees a more noble view of the univerſe, and experience and reflection obliged men to think, on many occaſions, a little more modeſtly of their own importance, if phyſics mortified them, metaphyſics raiſed their ſpirits again. Fantaſtic knowledge became as indulgent to ſelf-love, and to the pride of the human heart, as real ignorance had ever been: and altho' ſome of the puerilities and ſuperſtitions, which had prevailed in the nonage of philoſophy, were laid aſide, yet ſome of theſe, and other opinions as extravagant and as inconſiſtent as theſe, were taught in the ſchools of theology. They who came theiſts, and they who came atheiſts out of theſe ſchools, triumphed equally: the former in thoſe doctrines, that raiſed very nearly the human up to the divine nature; the latter in thoſe, that debaſed the divine moral character of God as low as human ideas of moral perfections. Theology furniſhed arms on both ſides. The theiſt confirmed men in the belief of a Supreme Being, and ſet their paſſions on his ſide, when he repreſented the predilection of this Being for them who were alone, or in common with the generated gods, the final cauſe of the whole creation, and who were made to exiſt, that there might be rational and proper objects of God's munificence in the world. The atheiſt proceeded, on the ſame theiſtical principles, to ſhake this belief of a Supreme Being. That they muſt be true, if there was ſuch a Being, he aſſerted as loudly as the divine. But he worked himſelf up to doubt, and he ſet, in his turn, the paſſions of men on his ſide, by declaiming pathetically againſt the phyſical and moral evil, that abounds in the world; by cenſuring

the diſpenſations of providence in it, and by ſhewing that many of the phænomena are not reconcileable to our ideas of holineſs, of goodneſs, of juſtice, and at the ſame time of wiſdom and power. He came at laſt to deny, that there was any God; becauſe he could not diſcover ſuch a metaphyſical and moral god as artificial theology had imagined.

The arguments of the atheiſt were ſo ſtrong ad hominem, for they are ſuch in no other manner, that the theiſt found himſelf obliged to ſeek the uſual refuge of philoſophers, who affect to dogmatize beyond their knowledge, and even beyond all their real, their clear and well determined ideas; the refuge I mean of hypotheſes, by which they endeavor to evade what they cannot anſwer. That of two principles was the refuge of pagans from time immemorial, and of a famous ſect of heretics in the chriſtian church. That of the fall of man, and of the continued malice of the firſt tempter, the old ſerpent, who cauſed it, was the refuge of orthodox chriſtians. By theſe they hoped to account for the introduction of phyſical and moral evil, conſiſtently with the propoſitions aſſumed, "that the world was made for man, and man to be happy "in it." By the hypotheſis of a future ſtate of rewards and puniſhments, both pagans and chriſtians hoped to reconcile the diſpenſations of providence in this life, to the moral attributes of God, and to the rule of his conduct, which they aſſumed likewiſe to be the ſame in him, as they are in human ideas.

The hypotheſis of two principles, ſelf-exiſting, infinite, oppoſite, is full of abſurdities. But abſtract it from theſe, and conſider it only as it accounts for the introduction of evil, and it will appear much more plauſible, tho' it be not more reaſonable, than that of the fall of Adam, and the malice of the

devil. The firſt ſaves, or ſeems to ſave, all the attributes of the good God. They all exiſt in him, as the theiſt conceives them. They are all exerted by him, as the theiſt aſſumes. But he is oppoſed by a coequal bad principle: and that mixture of good and evil, which appears in the frame and government of the world, ariſes from the perpetual ſtruggle of theſe rival powers. The laſt is full of abſurdities likewiſe; but abſtract it from theſe, and ſtill you will find, that it ſaves the divine attributes in no reſpect. It anſwers no purpoſe in oppoſition to atheiſm, and it could be ſo applied in good earneſt, whatever other purpoſe it had been made to anſwer, by no theiſts who underſtood their own hypotheſis, and the objections of their adverſaries. The goodneſs, and even the wiſdom of God lie juſt as much expoſed for ſuffering an inferior being, his creature and a creature in actual rebellion, to baffle the deſigns it is aſſumed that he had, as they would lie, if theſe deſigns were acknowledged to have been imperfectly executed by him. The ſeverity with which he puniſhed our firſt parents, for a fault, which he foreknew, that they would commit when he abandoned their freewill to the temptation of committing it, for there would be too much horror in ſuppoſing them predeſtinated to commit the fault; this ſeverity, I ſay, and much more that which has been exerciſed on the whole race of mankind, who ſhare the puniſhment, tho' they had no ſhare in the crime, cannot be reconciled to our ideas of juſtice. The introduction of phyſical and moral evil, therefore, could not be imputed more really to the Supreme Being independently of this hypotheſis, than he is made the author of them by it, with the aggravating circumſtance of puniſhing the innocent for what he permitted, in one ſenſe of the word, the guilty to do.

XLII.

THE diſpenſations of providence, in the diſtribution of good and evil, ſtand in no need of any hypotheſis to juſtify them: and if they did, that of a future ſtate of rewards and puniſhments would be inſufficient. Theſe two propoſitions may be made, I think, very evident: and I ſhall endeavor to make them ſo, before I quit the ſubject. Reaſon will neither deny, nor affirm, that there is to be a future ſtate: and the doctrine of rewards and puniſhments in it has ſo great a tendency to enforce civil laws, and to reſtrain the vices of men, that reaſon, who cannot decide for it on principles of natural theology, will not decide againſt it, on principles of good policy. Let this doctrine reſt on the authority of revelation. A theiſt, who does not believe the revelation, can have no objection to the doctrine in general. But even a theiſt, who does believe the revelation, may refuſe to admit the doctrine on principles on which it is eſtabliſhed by divines, and may diſapprove the uſe they make of it in ſeveral reſpects.

THE hypotheſes, that have been crayoned out, are the chief pillars of artificial theology. Some of them were aſſumed in compliance with the overweening notions of their own worth and importance, which men are prone to entertain, and by which they raiſe themſelves up to the imaginary heights that have been mentioned: tho' the diſtance between our friend GAY's Fly, in his fables, and the infinite ſelf-exiſtent Being, is not a whit greater than that between this Being and SOCRATES or St. PAUL, the two apoſtles of the gentiles. Other hypotheſes were invented to maintain theſe; and by tagging one hypotheſis to another, men deviated at laſt ſo far from

natural theology, and raiſed ſo much confuſion in their notions about it, that they had no means left of returning to the firſt principle of this theology, nor of clearing to common apprehenſion a little of this confuſion, but thoſe of another hypotheſis. Strange effect of theological ſkill! It makes a demonſtrated truth depend on a precarious ſuppoſition. If there is not a future ſtate, GOD is neither good nor juſt, according to our ideas of goodneſs and juſtice in his diſpenſations. If he is not good and juſt, according to our ideas of theſe moral attributes, neither can the phyſical attributes, ſuch as infinite wiſdom and power, belong to him: and a Being, who has none of theſe, is not GOD. But there is a future ſtate. Thus divines have dared to argue; and I am juſtified in ſaying, that they betray the cauſe of GOD to the atheiſt, when they join with him in ſo many points, that nothing remains to be oppoſed to him, in defence of GOD's exiſtence, but the problematical and futile reaſonings they employ to prove a future ſtate.

We are apt to carry the judgments we make into extremes, and the characters we give into panegyrics or ſatyrs. The examples of this kind are without number, but none are ſo remarkable as thoſe which we find in writers antient and modern, concerning the human nature. No creature is ſo miſerable, in ſome deſcriptions, nor ſo neceſſitous as man. He comes into the world bemoaning his ſtate. He grows up, and paſſes through the human ſtate, expoſed to many wants and bodily infirmities, unknown to the brute creation. You remember, no doubt, thoſe fine verſes in LUCRETIUS *:

Tum porro puer, ut ſævis projectus ab undis

* Lib. 5.

Navita, nudus humi jacet infans, indigus omni
Vitali auxilio . . . . . .
Vagituque locum lugubri complet, ut æquum eſt
Cui tantum in vitâ reſtat tranſire malorum.
At variæ creſcunt pecudes &c. . . .

No creature is to be compared with man in other deſcriptions, and in a contrary ſenſe. He was made of earth; but this earth was impregnated with celeſtial ſeeds, if you will take OVID's * word for it.

. . . . Recens tellus, ſeductaque nuper ab alto
Æthere, cognati retinebat ſemina cœli.

He was made in the image of the gods, and his very form denoted his divine original.

Os homini ſublime dedit, cœlumque tueri
Juſſit &c.

Some of theſe writers degrade even the human mind, and that intelligence and reaſon wherein we triumph. PLATO, who in one mood raiſes man up to the contemplation of the abſtract forms of all things, ſends him in another for inſtruction to the beaſts of the field: and the HOSPES in the POLITICUS reckons their converſation among the means of improvement in philoſophy and the knowledge of nature which men enjoyed under the reign of SATURN. MONTAGNE, another proſe-poet, deals with man as divines deal with GOD, and having drawn down human nature as low as he could, he raiſes that of ſome other animals ſo high, that he aſcribes a ſenſe of religion to elephants, and repreſents them deep in meditation and contemplation before the riſing ſun, and atten-

* Metam. L. 1.

tive at certain hours of the day to perform certain acts of devotion. He took this from PLINY *, and he might have added, on the same authority, among other excellencies, that they understood the language of their country, loved glory, and were great moralists; a commendation seldom due to men, "quæ etiam in homine rara." But COTTA, in the third book of the nature of the gods, goes so far as to assert that human reason, far from being an advantage, is a disadvantage to man, the worst present that heaven could make him, and one of the plagues of human life. "Pestifera multis, "admodum paucis salutaris." The academician complains that it is bountifully and largely bestowed, "tam munificè "et tam largè dari." But the whole chorus of theistical philosophers and of divines boast it to be the distinguishing gift of GOD to man, that which gives him a pre-eminence and a right of command over his fellow-creatures. OVID † calls him for this reason, sanctius his animal: and the stoic, whom COTTA answered, had not only distinguished him from other animals, but coupled him with the gods. The sole beings who have reason are gods and men .... "dii et homines "quibus profectò nihil est melius." In a word, metaphysicians have refined and subtilized their discourses on this favorite theme into a jargon which has no meaning at all, or a blasphemous meaning: and they would stand justly exposed to the ridicule of common sense, if common sense could resolve to laugh at blasphemy. There have been those who taught that the human is a portion of the divine soul. Others § have been more modest, and have allowed that the former is a created being, "creatura quæ mens dicitur ra-"tionalis," but a being of so high an order that there is none

* L. 8. C. 1. † Ib.

§ PORPH. PLOTIN. St. AUSTIN. MALB. &c.

supe-

ſuperior, except the Supreme Being, and that theſe two are more cloſely and intimately united than the human ſoul is to the body it informs.

THERE is a middle point between theſe extremes, where the truth lies: and he who ſeeks it may find it. He will not find what the principle of divine or even of human intelligence is. But he will ſoon find that the diſtance between them, whatever they are, is ſo immenſe as to admit in reality no degree of compariſon. He will find on the other hand many ſuch degrees between the human intelligence and that of various animals. He may be induced perhaps to think, that intellectual faculties and corporeal ſenſes, of the ſame and of different kinds, a recommunicated in ſome proportion or other to the whole race of animals; but he will be ſtill conſcious of his ſuperiority, as they themſelves are, moſt apparently, ſuch of them at leaſt as know mankind; not the ſagacious elephant alone, who ſubmits to his ſervice, but the lion and the tyger, who make him occaſionally their prey.

MAN is then the principal inhabitant of this planet, a being ſuperior to all the reſt. But will it follow from hence, that the ſyſtem wherein this planet rolls, or even this planet alone, was made for the ſake of man? Will it follow that infinite wiſdom had no other end in making man, than that of making an happy creature? Surely not. The ſuppoſitions are arbitrary, and the conſequences abſurd. There is no pretence to ſay that we have any more right to complain of the evils which affect our ſtate, than our fellow creatures of the evils which affect theirs, or which are common to both. Many of them have plainly ſome foreſight of the future, and of phyſical effects more than we have. But all of them feel the preſent. Becauſe GOD has given us intellectual powers ſupe-

ſuperior to theirs, to them more inſtinct perhaps, to us more reaſon certainly, is he cruel and unjuſt, becauſe he has not given us invulnerable and impeccable natures? By reaſon we learn to avoid, or to ſoften, or to remedy, many evils to which we are expoſed. By reaſon we ought to learn to bear ſuch as can be neither avoided, nor ſoftened, nor cured. If we employ our reaſon only to aggravate theſe evils in our imaginations, and to complain more loudly, far from having a better right to do ſo, we are on this very account juſt ſo much the more impertinent and abſurd.

THE whole tribe of divines aſſert, that the goodneſs of GOD required, he ſhould make the world for the ſake of man, and man purpoſely to make an happy creature. Thoſe among them, who riſe higher in metaphyſics, aſſert, "that GOD can "act for himſelf alone, and can create rational beings for no "reaſon but that of being known and loved by them *" Now I, who know juſt as much of this matter as all or any of theſe dogmatical perſons, deny, on my own authority, what they affirm, on theirs; and, whilſt they pretend arrogantly to demonſtrate, will preſume modeſtly and diffidently to gueſs. What they ſay, hangs ill together. I leave it to them to reconcile, among a multitude of other inconſiſtencies, and ſhall only obſerve, on the latter part, ſince we reaſon on human ideas, for we have no others whereon to reaſon, that they who advance it, entertain a very falſe notion of beneficence. An heathen moraliſt would have taught them better. No one confers a benefit, who has himſelf and his own intereſt and ſatisfaction alone in view, "ſi una dandi cauſa eſt ſe intueri "ac commodum ſuum, illud non beneficium ſed Fœnus eſt." From hence SENECA † concludes, that all the benefits we re-

* Vid. MALB. Preface to the Recherche, &c. † L. 4.

ceive

ceive from God, are truely benefits; ſince God can reap no advantage to himſelf in beſtowing them, and would, therefore, beſtow none, if utility to himſelf could be his motive. "Nam "ſi una beneficii dandi cauſa ſit dantis utilitas, nulla autem "ex nobis utilitas Deo ſperanda eſt, nulla dandi Deo bene-"ficii cauſa eſt."

But the former part of what is aſſerted on this occaſion by divines requires much more diſcourſe. They who aſſert, that man and the happineſs of man were the final cauſes of the creation, ſeem to have ideas no better determined of goodneſs, than the others of beneficence; for if there be not a certain proportion kept in the exerciſe of it, the ſeeming goodneſs of the heart is really the weakneſs of the mind. You ſee at once, what numberleſs inſtances might be produced to exemplify this truth. Let me aſk now the greateſt flatterers of human nature, what proportion there is between the excellencies of it, and the goodneſs of God, that ſhould determine his infinite wiſdom to judge it eſſential to his goodneſs, when he reſolved to make man, to make a planet the more for the habitation of this ideal creature? The habitation is fit for him, and he is fitted to live in it. He could not exiſt in any other. But will it follow, that the planet was made for him, not he for the planet? The aſs would be ſcorched in Venus or Mercury, and be frozen in Jupiter or Saturn. Will it follow, that this temperate planet was made for him, to bray and to eat thiſtles in it?

But I hear the divine reply, that man is a rational being, far ſuperior to the brute creation, and alone more worthy than all of them, to be the final cauſe of the world he and they inhabit. That he alone has reaſon may be too much to grant, ſince ſeveral of the faculties, in the exerciſe of which

it

it consists, are exercised by other animals, as every man, who is not CARTESIAN enough to believe more than DES CARTES believed himself, must allow. But whether the difference of that, which is called reason in man, and the intelligence of other animals, be in kind or in degree only, one way or other certain it is, that his superiority over them is very real and very great, according to all our ideas of order. It was this consideration, and this partial comparison of him with the creatures of his own system, that made the human pass for the first of all rational natures, after the divine, among those who had no suspicion of any others. Such were the narrow and confined ideas which it appears, by sacred as well as prophane philosophy, that all the antients entertained of the works of GOD. Modern discoveries in astronomy have presented them to us in a more noble scene. We cannot doubt, that numberless worlds and systems of worlds compose this amazing whole, the universe; and as little, I think, that the planets, which roll about our sun, or those which roll about a multitude of others, are inhabited by living creatures fit to be the inhabitants of them. When we have this view before our eyes, can we be stupid or impertinent and vain enough to imagine, that we stand alone or foremost among rational created beings? We who must be conscious, unless we are mad and have lost the use of our reason, of the imperfection of our reason? Shall we not be persuaded rather, that as there is a gradation of sense and intelligence here from animal beings imperceptible to us for their minuteness, without the help of microscopes and even with them, up to man in whom, tho' this be their highest stage, sense and intelligence stop short and remain very imperfect; so there is a gradation from man, through various forms of sense, intelligence and reason, up to beings who cannot be known by us, because of their distance from us, and whose rank in the intellectual system is even

above our conceptions? This ſyſtem as well as the corporeal, that is the whole phyſical or natural ſyſtem, for ſuch the two properly are, muſt have been alike preſent to the divine mind before he made them to exiſt. If we aſſume, therefore, that he made this world for the ſake of man, we muſt aſſume à fortiori that he made every other world for the ſake of the rational inhabitants he deſigned to place in it.

Now it ſeems to me to follow from this hypotheſis very abſurdly, that one of theſe ſyſtems was made in mere ſubſerviency to the other: whereas it is certainly agreeable to the cleareſt and moſt diſtinct ideas we are able to frame, of the proceedings of infinite wiſdom, to believe that each of them was made in ſome degree of ſubſerviency, and the animal ſyſtem perhaps in the greateſt, to the other, and that both of them were made on ſome greater motive, and for ſome greater purpoſe, whatever theſe were, than either. It might be obſerved, as another abſurdity, that according to this hypotheſis the whole univerſe was made for ſome minute parts of it, and that the divine architect of nature proceeded in an unnatural method, making the whole relatively to theſe, inſtead of making theſe and all the other parts relatively to the whole. But I chuſe rather to paſs it over, and to obſerve that the hypotheſis I oppoſe is not only unreaſonable in ſpeculation, but evidently contradicted by the phænomena. Nothing in truth can be ſo prepoſterous as the conduct of the divine and atheiſt appears to be, whilſt they deplore the miſerable ſtate of mankind, and the evils that abound in a world which they aſſume was made for the ſake of mankind.

Both of them reaſon à priori from aſſumed moral attributes of the divinity. So they call their method of reaſoning;

ing; and ſuch it is in a falſe ſenſe. It cannot be ſuch in a true one; ſince their ideas of theſe attributes are very human ideas, applied arbitrarily to the divine nature, not founded in any knowledge of it that they have really. No matter. They have accuſtomed men to this abſurd impoſition, and they proceed. Both of them pretend to be led from propoſition to propoſition down to their different concluſions. But the truth is, that they have their different concluſions from the firſt in view. The premiſes, wherein they concur ſo amicably, are plainly contrived to eſtabliſh ſuch notions of the moral attributes of GOD as ſhall appear repugnant to what we ſee and feel and know, when they are applied to the conſtitution of the world and to the ſtate of mankind in it: whereas it is from this conſtitution and this ſtate alone, that we can acquire any ideas of the divine attributes, or a right to affirm any thing about them. When they have done this, a COLLINS concludes, that there is no GOD; and a CLARKE, that there is a future ſtate of rewards and puniſhments.

LET us proceed in another method, argue from knowledge not from imagination, and advance nothing more than the former will juſtify. The former will juſtify enough to refute abundantly the two allies.

XLIII.

THE demonſtration of GOD's exiſtence is founded in knowledge, and purſued with intuitive certainty through every ſtep of it. This the divine will admit; and this the atheiſt is ſo little able to deny, that he has recourſe to cavil, as it has been ſaid already, and endeavors vainly to unravel the thread he cannot break. I aſſume, therefore, nothing more than what is proved, when I aſſert, that the Su-

preme Being is infinitely wiſe as well as powerful: and if he be infinitely wiſe, I need not ſtand to prove, that he always knows and always does that which is fitteſt to be done. To chuſe the beſt end, and to proportion the means to it, is the very definition of wiſdom. Two things are then evident. One, that ſince infinite wiſdom determined to call into exiſtence every being that does exiſt, and to conſtitute that univerſal ſyſtem, which we call the ſyſtem of nature, it was right and fit that infinite power ſhould be exerciſed for this purpoſe. The other, that ſince infinite wiſdom not only eſtabliſhed the end but directed the means, the ſyſtem of the univerſe muſt be neceſſarily the beſt of all poſſible ſyſtems, which it could not be, nor even a conſiſtent ſcheme, unleſs the whole was the final cauſe of every part, and no one nor more parts the final cauſes of the whole. The univerſe is an immenſe aggregate of ſyſtems. Every one of theſe, if we may judge by our own, contains ſeveral; and every one of theſe again, if we may judge by our own, is made up of a multitude of different modes of being animated and inanimated, thinking and unthinking, rational and irrational, different natures deſigned for different purpoſes, but all concurring in that one common ſyſtem, as we diſcern in too many inſtances not to have reaſon to believe it in all. Juſt ſo it is with reſpect to the various ſyſtems, and ſyſtems of ſyſtems, that compoſe the univerſe. As diſtant as they are, and as different as we may imagine them to be, they are all tyed together by relations and connections, by gradations and dependencies. The great material parts of our ſolar ſyſtem act on one another in more ways than philoſophy has been yet able to diſcover, and that of comets is not, perhaps, the only communication that other ſyſtems have with ours. Unthinking matter is diſperſed in various forms throughout the univerſe: and we ſee a gradation of them in the world we inhabit, from ſtones and other inert

inert bodies, up to vegetables and ſuch as have in themſelves, however inanimate, a natural tho' not ſpontaneous activity. So may we believe moſt reaſonably that various forms of thinking ſubſtance, or the faculties of ſenſe and thought in various degrees, are diſperſed likewiſe throughout the univerſe. We obſerve a gradation of them here, and we may well perſuade ourſelves, that there is a gradation of them through various ranks of beings, from the loweſt degrees in our world to the higheſt in ſome other.

I pretend not to dogmatize; but without having ſo much preſumption I may ſay, that the notions here advanced ſeem much more conformable to thoſe of a Supreme Being, and to all our ideas of order, than the contrary. They are probable in ſpeculation, and the appearances of things are favorable to them: whilſt the hypotheſis that aſſumes the world, and did formerly aſſume the whole univerſe, made for man, and man ſolely to be happy, is not founded in reaſon, and is contradicted by experience. By the conſtitution of the material, and by that of the intellectual world, more dependent on the former perhaps than we are willing to believe, the human race is expoſed to various evils, permanent and contingent, phyſical and moral. Of this philoſophers have complained in all ages. This they could not reconcile to the goodneſs and juſtice of a God, ſuch as they conceived him, nor on their principles: and therefore they cut the knot by denying him, or threw themſelves into an endleſs labyrinth of diſputation by the acknowledgment of him. But on ſuch principles as are here laid down, and in the truth of things moſt certainly, there is no ground for complaint, and there is abundant cauſe to give thanks. Tho' this world, and much more the univerſe, were not made for the ſake of man, and tho' infinite wiſdom contrived, and infinite power executed the ſtupendous work for ſome nobler

end, and ſome greater purpoſe, than the advantage of one poor vain mortal creature; yet has not the care of man been neglected in it. "In primâ illâ conſtitutione," ſays SENECA* ſpeaking of the world as the work of the gods, "cum uni-"verſa diſponerent, etiam noſtra viderunt, rationemque ho-"minis habuerunt:" which opinion, ſo little conſiſtent with the doctrine he teaches elſewhere, is far more reaſonable. We labor hard, we complicate various means to arrive at one end: and ſeveral ſyſtems of conduct are often employed by us to bring about ſome one paultry purpoſe. But GOD neither contrives, nor executes, like man. His means are ſimple, his purpoſes various: and the ſame ſyſtem that anſwers the greateſt, anſwers the leaſt. Thus regard has been had to man, and not to him alone, but to all other animals, according to their different natures and ends.

INFINITE wiſdom appears every where. Every new diſcovery, and how many and how marvellous have theſe been! is a new proof of this wiſdom, as well as of the power of GOD. The power of executing is ſeen in every inſtance, and tho' we cannot diſcern the wiſdom of contrivance and direction, which are more remote from our obſervation, in every inſtance, yet we ſee them in ſo many that it becomes the higheſt abſurdity not to acknowledge them in all. They, who do not acknowledge them ſo, judge of the proceedings of an all-perfect Being (for even the atheiſt diſputes, on this occaſion, for argument's ſake, on the ſuppoſition that there is one) as they would not judge of thoſe of a prince or miniſter of ſtate, who had acquired and deſerved, by a long courſe of political conduct, the reputation of wiſdom. Theſe they would not dare to pronounce unwiſe in any caſe, becauſe they ſaw the meaſures im-

* De Benef. L. 6.

perfectly,

perfectly, and becauſe the ends were unknown to them. Yet thus they judge with reſpect to GOD. "Why does the rain "pour down into the ſea, whilſt the ſandy deſerts of Lybia "are parched with drought? Why do wintry ſtorms happen "in the ſummer, and irregular ſeaſons deſtroy our harveſts?" Such queſtions as theſe have been often aſked, and all of them relatively to man. They have been anſwered in many inſtances by new diſcoveries, after the deaths of thoſe who aſked them: and poſterity has been convinced, tho' they did not live to be ſo, that when they triumphed in them, they triumphed in their ignorance. DEMOCRITUS, EPICURUS, STRATO, ALPHONSUS of CASTILE, in ſhort all the makers and menders of worlds, ſhewed nothing but their ignorance and their preſumption. They attempted to riſe above GOD, and they are become the jeſt of mankind.

THO' I think that the moral attributes of the Supreme Being are abſorbed, as I expreſſed myſelf before, in his wiſdom, that we ſhould conſider them only as different modifications of this phyſical attribute, whatever ideas we may frame on the phænomena, and that we muſt always talk precariouſly and impertinently when we preſume to apply our ideas of them to the appearances of things; yet I think it proper to ſhew the divine and the atheiſt that even the goodneſs of GOD is not hard to defend againſt them both, by every one who denies, as every one may moſt reaſonably, the queſtion they beg, and grant in conſequence of their alliance to one another.

THE wiſdom is not ſo often diſcernible by us, as the power of GOD, nor the goodneſs as the wiſdom. But a multitude of the phænomena being conformable to our ideas of goodneſs, we may reaſon about it as we did juſt now about the divine wiſdom. If our adverſaries ſhew that men are ex-

poſed to many phyſical and moral evils, we can ſhew much more good of both kinds that God has beſtowed on us, or put it into our power to procure to ourſelves. The evils we complain of are conſtant or occaſional effects of the conſtitution of a world that was not made for our ſakes. But the means to ſoften ſome, to prevent others, and to palliate and even to cure thoſe that cannot be prevented, are ſo many inſtances of the poſitive goodneſs of God, which ought to be brought to account and ſet againſt the evils with greater gratitude and more fairly than they are by men who paſs them ſlightly over, whilſt they deſcend into every particular of the other ſort, aggravate the leaſt, and declaim pathetically and partially on all.

It would be eaſy to confirm and illuſtrate, what is advanced in the phyſical part by numerous and unanſwerable proofs, which are to be found in the writings of natural philoſophers. Theſe men have done more ſervice to true theiſm than all the metaphyſical reaſoners à priori: or to ſay ſomething ſtronger and equally true, they have done it more ſervice than divines and atheiſts in confederacy have done it hurt. It is impoſſible to read, with attention and without prejudice, what the former have writ, and not to be convinced by fact, and by reaſon grounded on fact, not on hypotheſis, firſt that we ought to conſider the world we inhabit no otherwiſe than as a little wheel in our ſolar ſyſtem; nor our ſolar ſyſtem any otherwiſe than as a little but larger wheel in the immenſe machine of the univerſe; and both the one and the other neceſſary perhaps to the motion of the whole and to the preordained revolutions in it: nor without being convinced, ſecondly, that the wiſdom, or, if you had rather ſay ſo, the goodneſs of God has provided amply for the well-being of man in this world, and of the whole animal kind, who are objects

objects of the divine care as well as he, according to their various deſtinations. In fine, and to take away every atheiſtical ſubterfuge; whether we ſay, that the ſeveral ſpecies of animals were the final cauſes of theſe things, which ſeem particularly adapted to the uſe of each; or whether we ſay, that the world was made ſuch as it is, without any regard to them; the proofs of divine wiſdom and goodneſs will be equally ſtrong: for if the world was made for the univerſe only, and without any regard to it's future inhabitants, this wiſdom and goodneſs were exerciſed as much in fitting theſe inhabitants to live commodiouſly in a world already made, as they could have been in making a world on purpoſe for them.

But we are not to think in this manner of the divine proceedings, nor to imagine that in them one plan ſucceeded another. Both were alike preſent to the mind of God. Our planet might have been, even uninhabited, very fit for all the mechanical purpoſes of it in the material ſyſtem. But there might be other purpoſes, which the creation of animals was neceſſary to anſwer: and ſince they were created, we ought to think that they were ſo for ſome purpoſe. It might be determined in the divine ideas, that there ſhould be a gradation of life and intellect throughout the univerſe. In this caſe, it was neceſſary that there ſhould be ſome creatures at our pitch of rationality, and others endued with all the degrees of life, ſenſe, and intellect, which we obſerve in the ſeveral ſpecies from the inſect up to man. This world might be allotted to ſuch kinds and orders of animated beings: and tho' it was made for the univerſe, not for them, ſome regard might be had to them, and to their well-being in the conſtitution of it. They were not made to be miſerable. But even man was not made to be happier than it was conſiſtent with this part of

the material ſyſtem, and with his own rank in the intellectual, that he ſhould be.

XLIV.

THE truth is, that when we contemplate the phænomena, we cannot fail to diſcern, unleſs we live in a miſt of metaphyſics, how repugnant to them it is to affirm, that the world was made for the ſake of man alone. Some modern divines have been candid enough to give up the point. Archbiſhop KING at leaſt, in his eſſay on the original of evil, ſaw ſo plainly that even the natural and real attributes of GOD, even his wiſdom and his power, could not be otherwiſe defended againſt the cavils of atheiſm and of theology, that he ſcrupled not to declare the opinion to be abſurd, and what no one would object, who was not blinded with pride and ignorance *. But we diſcern at the ſame time in the contemplation of the phænomena, that this world is accommodated in certain reſpects to the utility of the animals it contains, and that their natures are adapted in many more to the nature of the world. Thus the oblique poſition of the earth, by the inclination of it's axis to the plane of the ecliptic, makes a more equal diſtribution of the ſun's heat throughout the year, and in the different zones or climates, than there could be in any other poſition. Thus again, men and all other ſpecies of animals are fitted for different climates and different elements, wherein they find the nouriſhment and the employment proper to their different natures. The animal kind may ſeem to be a final cauſe of the firſt. The conſtitution of the

* C. 4. Sec. 2.

world

world is evidently the reaſon of the laſt. I deſcend into no more particulars. You will find an abundance of them collected by RAY, DERHAM, NIEUENTYT, and other writers, wherein the power and wiſdom of GOD in the whole creation are diſplayed: and ſuch proofs are brought that man and every ſpecies of the animal kind are fitted, in their very formation, for their ſtate here, as nothing but the moſt irrational obſtinacy can reſiſt. The minuteſt inſtances are deciſive, and thoſe which ſeem the moſt obvious, becauſe the moſt common, appear on a cloſer inſpection not leſs aſtoniſhing than the greateſt phænomena, and the more remote from obſervation. The animal eye, for inſtance, is not leſs aſtoniſhing in it's various ſituations, motions and particular uſes, than the eye of the world the ſun. To theſe writings let me refer you. Natural philoſophy, thus applied, leads irreſiſtibly to natural theology, and gives a juſt contempt for the figments and hypotheſes of artificial. Read, contemplate, adore, give thanks, and be reſigned.

METHINKS I hear a ſincere and devout theiſt, in the midſt of ſuch meditations as theſe, cry out, "No, the world was "not made for man, nor man only to be happy. The ob- "jections urged by atheiſts and divines againſt the wiſdom "and goodneſs of the Supreme Being, on theſe arbitrary "ſuppoſitions, deſtroy their own foundations. Mankind is "expoſed, as well as other animals, to many inconveniencies "and to various evils, by the conſtitution of the world. The "world was not, therefore, made for him, nor he only to be "happy. But he enjoys numberleſs benefits, by the fitneſs "of his nature to this conſtitution, unaſked, unmerited, freely "beſtowed: and tho' he returns, like other animals, to the duſt, "yet neither he nor they are willing to leave the ſtate where- "in they are placed here. The wiſdom and the goodneſs of

"God are therefore manifeſt. I thank thee, O my Creator! "that I am placed in a rank, low in the whole order of "being, but the firſt in that animal ſyſtem to which I be- "long: a rank wherein I am made capable of knowing thee, "and of diſcovering thy will, the perfection of my own na- "ture, and the means of my own happineſs. Far be it from "me to repine at my preſent ſtate, like thoſe who deny "thee; or like thoſe who own thee, only to cenſure thy "works, and the diſpenſations of thy providence. May I "enjoy thankfully the benefits beſtowed on me by thy divine "liberality. May I ſuffer the evils to which I ſtand expoſed, "patiently, nay willingly. None of thy creatures are made "to be perfectly happy, like thyſelf; nor did thy goodneſs "require that they ſhould be ſo. Such of them as are more "worthy objects of it than thy human creatures, ſuperior na- "tures that inhabit other worlds, may be affected in ſome "degree or other by phyſical evils, ſince theſe are effects of "the general laws of matter and motion. They muſt be af- "fected too in ſome degree or other by moral evil, ſince mo- "ral evil is the conſequence of error as well as of diſorderly ap- "petites and paſſions, and ſince error is the conſequence of "imperfect underſtanding. Leſs of this evil may prevail "among them. But all that is finite, the moſt exalted in- "telligences, muſt be liable to ſome errors. Thou, O God! "art alone that Being who is liable to none, and to whom "infallibility and impeccability belong."

Duc me, parens celſique dominator poli,
Quocumque placuit. Nulla parendi mora eſt.
Aſſum impiger *.

* Sen. Ep. 107.

Shall

SHALL we ſuppoſe now that an atheiſt and a divine break in upon the theiſt, and interrupt his pious meditations by inſiſting ſtill, like the echoes of EPICURUS, that if there is a GOD he muſt be infinitely good as well as wiſe and powerful, and by aſking then how it comes to paſs that there is any evil in the world? How comes it to paſs that the happineſs of man is not more complete, and better provided for in it? Our theiſt would not be embaraſſed. His anſwer would be more ready than their reply. The firſt abſurdity conſiſts in this, that they apply their notions of goodneſs to the divine nature; and the ſecond is this, that the argument they raiſe on theſe notions proves a great deal too much. Enough has been ſaid concerning the firſt, and if the theiſt reaſons on their notions of divine goodneſs, it is merely ex abundantiâ. But he will expoſe the ſecond, by obſerving that if goodneſs ought to be, as they aſſume, the ſole directing principle in this caſe, and if wiſdom ought to contrive and power to execute under this direction, the happineſs of man ought to be proportionable to the goodneſs of GOD, that is infinite; than which no greater abſurdity can be conceived. But if we aſſume, in oppoſition to theſe confederates, that divine wiſdom, whereof we have ideas much better determined than we have of divine goodneſs, ought to be deemed in this as in every other caſe the directing principle of divine conduct, it will follow without any abſurdity, nay moſt agreeably to the reaſon of things, that the effect may be proportionable to the cauſe, that is infinite. It implies contradiction to ſay that GOD ſhould have made a creature infinitely happy, as happy as himſelf. But it implies none to ſay that he made a ſyſtem of creation infinitely wiſe, and the beſt of all poſſible ſyſtems.

After this our theiſt would be apt to make many juſt reproaches to the two confederates. He would reproach the atheiſt with his ſpirit of cavil and the unfairneſs of his proceedings, You pretend, would he ſay, that you cannot believe a God, becauſe you cannot reconcile many appearances, nor the ſtate of mankind in general, to your notions of goodneſs. But on your principles you would not acknowledge him, if the proofs of his goodneſs were as clear, as uniform, and as numerous as thoſe of his wiſdom; for even to theſe you do not yield. Theſe however are conformable to the notions of wiſdom you muſt have, if you have any at all. You may cavil about the proofs of his goodneſs, and produce inſtances that ſeem repugnant to it, and that would be ſo if your hypotheſis was true. But the proofs of his wiſdom have nothing equivocal nor problematical in them upon any hypotheſis. You can produce no inſtances that even ſeem to be repugnant to it. Whilſt natural philoſophy was ill cultivated, and ill underſtood indeed, men founded their objections to the wiſdom of God in their ignorance. But ſince the noble ſcience has been improved by experiment and geometry, ſince greater diſcoveries of the cauſes and effects of the phænomena in the œconomy of the world have been made, every new diſcovery has been a new proof of the wiſdom of God, and it has ſhined conſpicuous in the very inſtances brought againſt it.

It is a vain undertaking to go about to convince men of the goodneſs of God, who are obſtinate enough to reſiſt ſuch evident demonſtrations of his wiſdom, or not to ſee that an all-perfect Being muſt always be determined by the harmonious concurrence of all his perfections; and not in one inſtance by his goodneſs, in another by his juſtice, and ſo on. When we

ſay, that he is infinitely wiſe, we mean that he does on every occaſion that which is fitteſt to be done, and it would imply contradiction to aſſert this, and to deny the other. But however the theiſt might go one ſtep further in reproaches to the atheiſt. With what face, might he ſay to him, can you object to the goodneſs of God, that men are expoſed to general evils, to tempeſts, to earthquakes, to famine, to peſtilence, as well as to particular evils, to pain, to ſickneſs, and to violent death? Is God not good, becauſe they are expoſed to evils that reſult neceſſarily from the conſtitution of a world, which, if we ſhould allow it to have been made for man, was made for the univerſe too, and to all of which evils they expoſe themſelves voluntarily for no other reaſon than to indulge the ruling paſſion of their minds, and to ſate their ambition or their avarice for inſtance, if theſe were to be ſated? God has given us means, as I ſaid above, to avoid, or to palliate, or to cure theſe evils in many caſes. But men court them. The evils, that may be ſaid to come from God, are, for the moſt part, ſoon over. The greateſt of theſe calamities are ſeldom renewed; and few men have been, I ſuppoſe, expoſed to the plague twice, or involved twice in the ruins of an earthquake. But ambition, avarice, and other ruling paſſions, are never ſated: and the ſame perſons expoſe themſelves anew and continually to all the evils that accompany the purſuit of them. The theiſt might conclude this head very properly, by ſaying to the atheiſt, theſe evils, which you found ſo highly and with ſo ill a grace, for the reaſons that have been given, muſt be contingent effects of the conſtitution of the world, or they muſt be cauſed by particular directions. Take your choice. If you ſay the firſt, you ſay nothing that is inconſiſtent with the goodneſs of a Creator and Governor, whilſt you confirm my hypotheſis, that this world was made for the univerſe, not for

man.

man. If you ſay the laſt, you contradict yourſelf: you own that there is a God, and you acknowledge his providence.

The ſame theiſt might preſs his two adverſaries, the atheiſt and the divine both, in this manner ſtill further. If you ſay, that God has not created the beſt of all poſſible ſyſtems in creating the univerſe, you deny that infinite wiſdom which you, the divine, aſſert, and the proofs of which you as well as I have challenged the atheiſt to controvert. If you ſay, that he has, you muſt either ceaſe your complaints, or you muſt continue to complain on one of theſe two principles, that the Creator ought to have eſtabliſhed a ſyſtem that was not the beſt relatively to the whole of his deſign, that is to the univerſe, but the beſt relatively to man; or elſe that he ought to have created no ſuch being as man. Thus you are driven from abſurdity to abſurdity; for thus you do ſomething more abſurd, if poſſible, than a direct denial of the wiſdom of God would be. One of you admits, and the other cannot controvert this wiſdom: and then you both aſſert, that he ſhould not have acted conformably to it. His goodneſs ſhould have controuled his wiſdom He ſhould have changed the order of the univerſe, or he ſhould have broke the chain of intellectual beings. Such an aſſumed conduct may be conformable to your ideas of goodneſs. But the ideas of God, if we may aſcribe ideas to him, no more than his ways, are not thoſe of man: and beſides, ſuch a conduct as this, even in human affairs, can anſwer no ideas but thoſe of weakneſs, frailty, prepoſſeſſion and partiality. Theſe, therefore, you would aſcribe to the all perfect Being. Such is your impiety. One of you, that he may have a pretence to doubt of God's exiſtence. The other, that he may have a pretence to be dogmatical about the deſigns of God, and the future diſpenſations of his providence.

XLV.

XLV.

IT may be ſaid that the theiſt argues hypothetically in defence of the divine attributes, like the atheiſt and divine who attack them. Now that he argues in ſome ſort hypothetically, I agree. But that he argues in any ſort like them, I deny. An hypotheſis, which the phænomena contradict, or which is inconſiſtent even with one of them, is not admiſſable. An hypotheſis which they all concur to eſtabliſh, is ſcarce an hypotheſis. The goodneſs of GOD required that this world ſhould be made for the ſake of man, and he only to be happy, is an hypotheſis of the firſt kind. That the goodneſs of GOD did not require this, and that his wiſdom required ſomething elſe, ſince it appears in his works that ſomething elſe has been done, and ſince his works which muſt be always conformable to his attributes can alone enable us to judge concerning theſe; this, I ſay, is ſcarce an hypotheſis. It is founded in fact, and is agreeable to our cleareſt and moſt diſtinct ideas. The atheiſt and the divine argue, from what they do not know, againſt what they do know; and in order to make the impoſition paſs, they trifle groſly between two methods of reaſoning. One proves à poſteriori that there is a firſt intelligent cauſe of all things. The other ſuppoſes it. After this, they attempt to prove à priori that there is a neceſſary connection between the wiſdom and power of this Being, and his goodneſs and juſtice, which are, they ſay, in him, the very ſame that they are in our ideas. After this, they return again to the former method, and attempt to prove à poſteriori that he is neither good nor juſt. The theiſt employs no ſuch artifice. He reaſons uniformly, from the works of GOD, to his exiſtence and his attributes:

and reaſoning in this manner he raiſes no objection to either, and is able to defend both.

I have ſpoke often of the pride of man, as the cauſe of many errors in philoſophy, and eſpecially in the firſt philoſophy. It has no doubt a ſhare in determining the atheiſt to the opinions that have been mentioned. But the atheiſt has another motive. His great aim is to free his mind from the belief that there is any Supreme Being. He ſtruggles hard againſt demonſtration, and catches at every hypotheſis that may give him a pretence to doubt. Such a pretence he finds in that which aſſumes notions of the moral attributes of God, and of his deſigns in favor of man, and then oppoſes the phænomena to theſe notions. He has, on this occaſion, the very ſingular advantage we have obſerved, that many of his adverſaries agree with him in the premiſes, help him to eſtabliſh them, and defend the cauſe of theiſm very ill againſt his concluſions afterwards. Divines, who do in effect no leſs than betray this cauſe to him, have likewiſe their private motive. They are unwilling to lower, on any account, their notions of human worth and importance, or of the deſigns of God in favor of man; and for that reaſon, ſince theſe notions cannot be maintained on the appearances of things that are, they have endeavored, in all ages, and in all religions, to maintain them on the ſuppoſition of things that may be: and the whole force of human imagination has been employed to ſoothe human pride. Much of what the pagans advanced hypothetically to keep up theſe notions, in oppoſition to univerſal experience, is indeed no longer hypothetical; ſince it has been admitted into chriſtianity. It is not hypothetical, I mean, when it is conſidered as a matter of revelation; for it is as hypothetical as ever, when it is conſidered as an object of reaſon. Let us leave it then reſpectfully to revelation,

lation, which is ſufficient, or nothing can be ſo, to ſupport it. Let us not employ our reaſon about things which ſhe muſt either diſown, or proſtitute herſelf to maintain. Let us not employ her to multiply, or to improve hypotheſes. Let us employ her in a manner to want none: and that we ſhall do effectually, if we keep her within thoſe bounds which GOD has preſcribed, by revealing in his works ſo much and no more of natural theology, and of natural religion, as he thought it neceſſary for us to know.

THESE precautions are the more fit to be taken, becauſe tho' our religion forbids pride, and teaches humility, yet the whole ſyſtem of it tends to inſpire the former into all thoſe who are not able to diſcern the conſiſtency of particular precepts and of the ſyſtem, which I preſume that very few are. According to this ſyſtem, man was not only made in the image of GOD, but the world and he were ſo made that his happineſs ſeemed to be the final cauſe of the whole. He fell, indeed, from this ſtate; but GOD, who ſuffered him to fall, rather than to reſtrain him in the exerciſe of his free will, determined inſtantly to raiſe him again, by the ſacrifice of his own Son: whilſt he abandoned myriads of fallen angels to the fatal conſequences of their revolt, without any hopes of redemption. Is it poſſible to conceive higher notions of a created being, than theſe revealed truths muſt inſpire? PLATO aſſerted, on his exalted notions of the Supreme Being, that immortality was communicated by a ſort of phyſical neceſſity to every creature that this Being himſelf created. Chriſtian philoſophers might be led more eaſily from the exalted notions of human nature, which theſe revealed truths inſpire, to imagine that happineſs was to be communicated by a ſort of moral neceſſity to ſuch a creature as man. Allow me one inſtance more. The Iſraelites were one of the leaſt, and leaſt

worthy nations of the earth. Yet, God chose them, according to the same system, by a wonderful predilection for his favorite people, preferred them to all the people of the earth, and assigned them a country flowing with milk and honey. May not christian philosophers have been led, by this example, to believe that God preferred mankind to all other intellectual creatures, and made a particular world for them, as he assigned a particular country to the Israelites? The facts, tho' received in theology, are not, indeed, applicable to philosophy. But when the mind is once tinctured by them, and an habit contracted of reasoning from them, any thing, that appears analogous to them, will be the more easily admitted.

XLVI.

THE confederacy between atheists and divines appears to have been carried very far, by what has been said already. I have chose in the reflections that have been made to account for the physical and moral evil that is in the world, and to defend the attributes of God, to go up to the source of all the false reasoning about them, rather than to insist on the topics that are commonly employed: and I hope, that the method I have taken is not the worse for being shorter, plainer, and less metaphysical. I must confess that I do not see, how the cause of God can be effectually pleaded on this head any other way. But there is another head, on which it must be pleaded likewise; for the antitheistical confederacy does not end here. Lest the bare existence of evil should not afford the atheist color enough to deny the being of God, nor the divine a sufficient foundation whereon to erect, by the seeming authority of reason, that system of another world, which is, and always has been, of great advantage to him in this, they proceed

proceed to conſider theſe evils in the diſtribution of them. The ſuppoſed injuſtice of this diſtribution has been ever in their mouths a ſubject of accuſation, not to ſay of invective, againſt the providence of God: and they have been heard with partiality of two kinds, that of love, and that of averſion, in their favor. The good that happens to themſelves, and to thoſe with whom they are intimately connected, by ſentiment, by intereſt, and often by both, is an object of one partiality among men. The evil, that happens to theſe, is an object of the other. The order is reverſed, when perſons we diſapprove, or who ſtand in oppoſition to our ſentiments or intereſts, are concerned. We hate the good, and we love the evil that happens to them. Great advantage has been taken of theſe natural diſpoſitions to attack ſucceſsfully the divine providence in human opinion. But here, indeed, the alliance between the atheiſt and the divine breaks off. The former concludes directly, that there is no God. The latter, after all he has done to favor this opinion indirectly, maintains ſtill that there is one. How well the premiſes common to both, and their oppoſite concluſions are founded, let us examine. I fear, that the atheiſt will appear, to that reaſon to which they both appeal, more conſiſtent in his abſurdity than the divine.

I think I have ſaid, that artificial theology betrays the cauſe of God, how ſincerely and how piouſly ſoever ſome of the profeſſors of it may direct their intentions: and, if I have ſaid ſo, I ſhall not recall my words. If theſe men had left the atheiſts to aſſert alone, both vainly and fooliſhly, that divine goodneſs required the world ſhould be made for the ſake of man, and that God could have no other motive to create him, except that of communicating happineſs to him, they might have defended this goodneſs ſufficiently, as I hope it has been ſhewn, and the divine juſtice too, as I hope it will be

be ſhewn. They would have had no after-game to play, nor any contradictions to reconcile. The ſtoics would not have been obliged to deny that to be evil, which they and every one elſe felt to be evil; nor the chriſtians to reſt their defence on this propoſition, that the firſt deſigns of GOD were diſappointed by the fall of man, which cannot be conceived by reaſon, and which the atheiſt will not admit on the authority of revelation, or rather of a moral, philoſophical, ægyptian allegory. But when they reaſoned on the ſame principles, as the atheiſt reaſoned, down to his concluſion excluſively, they left themſelves no pretence for not concurring in the ſame concluſion but that of an hypotheſis, and of an hypotheſis which cannot, if it is admitted, effectually diſcharge the goodneſs, nor juſtice of GOD at the tribunal of reaſon. Thus it ſeems plain to me, that they betray the cauſe of GOD; for they undetermine it: and if the hypotheſis fails, that truth which was raiſed on demonſtration fails with it, or totters on ſo precarious a ſupport.

To ſuch a riſque at leaſt does artificial theology, as it is employed in this caſe, expoſe the firſt principle of all religion: and we may apply to the ſchools that teach it, what ARISTO of Chios ſaid of ſome ſchools of philoſophy. As caution was to be uſed leſt men ſhould go debauched out of the ſchool of ARISTIPPUS, or moroſe out of that of ZENO, ſo caution ſhould be uſed leſt men go infidels out of the ſchools of chriſtianity. A few reflections will ſhew that the riſque, I mention, is not imaginary but very real. No doctrines were ever inculcated more ſtrongly on the minds of men, nor enforced by more authority, than thoſe of a future ſtate. The inſtitutors of religions, and the prieſts of theſe religions, were careful to eſtabliſh and to maintain them in belief. They excited devotion, multiplied obſervances, and increaſed offerings. By them, the religious ſo-

ciety has governed principally in all ages*: and if the prieſts of Ægypt undertook to conduct men in the way of the gods, in the difficult road, in the ineffable paths, and through the brazen gates that lead to the manſions of the bleſſed, we may quote prieſts in the pale of chriſtianity, at this time, who undertake to ſave men from hell, to deliver them from purgatory, and to conduct them to heaven through the gates whereof St. Peter has the keys, as well as others who make ſome of the ſame pretenſions, and who ſcruple not to declare, that if this doctrine be taken away, all difference between good and bad is taken away, and there is no ſuch thing as religion left. To this authority we muſt add that of legiſlators and magiſtrates, who have for political purpoſes authoriſed the ſame doctrines, ſolemniſed them by religious inſtitutions, like thoſe of the Eleuſinian myſteries, confirmed them by laws, and ſet education, the great nurſe of theological opinions, on their ſide. Theſe are great advantages, and yet we do not find that this doctrine ever had an effect ſuitable to them, or to the importance of it. Remote conſiderations, tho' they are believed, have not indeed the ſame influence that immediate objects have. But they have an influence proportionable to the belief of them: and they muſt have this influence, eſpecially in a caſe like this, where the puniſhments held out, are unavoidable, and no man can hope, as every man does in all other caſes, to eſcape them.

I do not ſay, that to believe a future ſtate is to believe a vulgar error: but this I ſay, it cannot be demonſtrated by reaſon; it is not in the nature of it capable of demonſtration, and no one ever returned that irremeable way to give us an aſſurance of the fact. It was, therefore, originally an hypotheſis,

* Euſeb. Præp. Evan. L. 9. C. 10.

and

and it may, therefore, be a vulgar error. It was taken upon truſt by the people who firſt adopted it, and made prevalent by art and induſtry among the vulgar who never examine, till it came to be doubted, diſputed and denied by ſuch as did examine. It was made, like many other opinions that had no better foundations, ſubſervient to philoſophical ſyſtems, and political inſtitutions. It was advanced in anſwer to the great atheiſtical argument, drawn from the proſperity of wicked men. It was applied to enforce human laws, by divine and temporary rewards and puniſhments, by the fear of others more grievous, and more laſting, to procure greater authority to governors and more ſubmiſſion from the governed. It was communicated from Ægypt, the mother of good policy as well as of ſuperſtition, to Greece. The luxuriant imaginations of that people improved it, and the Mythologia de inferis became a favorite theme of their poets, of ORPHEUS, of HOMER, and ſo downwards even to their dramatic writers. There ſeems likewiſe to have been a cuſtom then, not very unlike to that which prevailed about two centuries ago in the chriſtian church generally, and much later, I believe, in Spain, the cuſtom I mean of acting myſteries. Such theſe repreſentations were called by the heathens, and the ſame kind of religious ſopperies retained the ſame name among chriſtians.

BUT that which gave the greateſt credit to this doctrine, and ſpread it moſt, was the authority of HOMER and PLATO. The former was gravely quoted by philoſophers, as a philoſopher, an hiſtorian and a divine, and all as properly, no doubt, as the latter. The Romans took this doctrine and theſe myſteries from the Greeks: and the Greeks carried them back, when they conquered Aſia and Ægypt, to countries from whence they had received them. HOMER and PLATO were in the zenith of their glory at the time of ALEXANDER's expe-

dition, and they continued to be ſo in the reigns of his ſucceſſors. Whether the Jews, who began about or a little before this time to have ſchools, and to engraft from foreign ſtocks on their own law, might not have taken the firſt hints of a future ſtate from ſome of their neighbours, I know not. But it is moſt probable that this doctrine was not known, or at leaſt not taught amongſt them, till the diſputes in their ſchools gave a riſe to the ſects of ſaducees and phariſees in their church. The moſt conſiderable perſons, the richeſt ſays JOSEPHUS, adhered to the ſaducees, who adhered ſo ſtrictly to the law of MOSES that they could not admit a doctrine whereof there appeared no traces in it, and, therefore, denied the reſurrection. The phariſees or the ſeparatiſts, on the other hand, were ready to admit things marvellous in doctrine, and ſuperſtitious in practice; to reconcile them, if they could, to the written, or to juſtify them by an oral law; for no expedient ſerves the purpoſe of innovators better than that of a blind tradition. All this was proper to ſtrike the multitude: and the multitude followed the phariſees. Thus the doctrine of a future ſtate, and even of a tranſmigration of ſouls, ſlided into the ſyſtem of judaiſm before the coming of CHRIST: and yet they who adopted this doctrine then had no better authority for it than that of ægyptian prieſts, greek poets, and pythagorean and platonic hypotheſes.

TRUE it is that the immortality of the ſoul, and future rewards and puniſhments, ſome parts of what philoſophers and poets had imagined, were ſanctified by revelation ſoon afterwards. Thus ſanctified, they deſerve our reſpect, and challenge the implicit belief of every chriſtian. Thus, and thus alone they are maintained in opinion, and not by the futile reaſonings of divines with which we have to do here. Theſe are called demonſtrations by the men who make them,

and who triumph in them as if they were ſufficient of themſelves and muſt convince by their own evidence. But the truth is, they would have little effect on the minds of men, if they did not paſs for ſuperabundant proofs of what is made certain by revelation, and if the reſpect that men pay to revelation did not ſcreen theſe reaſoners from being attacked ſo directly, and in ſo many ways as they would be otherwiſe, and as they deſerve to be, for preſuming to reſt all religion both natural and revealed on their metaphyſical refinements, and their abſtract reaſonings à priori.

The moſt zealous aſſerters of a Supreme Being, the warmeſt defenders of his providence, and they who were the moſt perſuaded of the neceſſity of a religion to preſerve morality, and the good order of civil government, were far from this preſumption. Some of them rather hoped than believed the immortality of the ſoul; and if they admitted a future ſtate, they laughed at the old women's tales, the aniles fabulæ of an hell and the furies. They either rejected the doctrine, or they admitted it by halves. It was not only problematical in the opinions of theiſtical philoſophers, but it ſeems, in ſeveral inſtances, to have had little hold on vulgar opinion; notwithſtanding the means that had been uſed to inculcate it. One inſtance, and a remarkable one it is, ſhall be given. Tully * in a public pleading, wherein we may aſſure ourſelves that he was careful to let nothing fall, that might be an occaſion of ſcandal by contradicting and ridiculing the religious eſtabliſhed opinions, ſpeaking of Oppianicus, who had been condemned only to baniſhment, and, after ſaying that he ſhould have killed himſelf, adds--" nam nunc quidem" (Oppianicus was then dead in his exile) " quid tandem illi mali " mors attulit? Niſi fortè ineptiis ac fabulis ducimur ut

* Orat. pro A. Cluen.

" exiſti-

" exiſtimemus illum apud inferos impiorum ſupplicia per-
" ferre . . . . actum eſſe præcipitem in ſceleratorum ſedem
" atque regionem. Quæ ſi falſa ſint, id quod omnes in-
" telligunt, quid ei tandem mors eripuit præter ſenſum
" doloris?"

The uſe I make of this deduction is to ſhew that the doctrine of future rewards and puniſhments, having been precarioufly eſtabliſhed, and neither generally nor entirely believed, by thoſe who believed the exiſtence of God on better foundations, there is a real danger to this firſt principle of all religion ariſing from the hypotheſis againſt which I contend. Reaſon, experience and ſelf-conſciouſneſs, prove to me that a man may be thoroughly convinced, that there is a Supreme and ſelf-exiſtent Being, of infinite power and wiſdom; without ſubſcribing to ſuch notions of his moral attributes as divines would impoſe, or believing them any more capable than himſelf, of determining what theſe attributes required that God ſhould do. But I can eaſily conceive, at the ſame time, that by eloquent diſcourſes on the dignity of human nature, and the miſery of human kind, by the cajolement of appeals to his paſſions and to his ſenſes, this man may be induced to think that the miſery of mankind overballances their happineſs in general*; and that in particular the criminal have many times the lot of the innocent, and the innocent that of the criminal: from whence he may conclude, that God is an unjuſt and cruel Being, and deals unreaſonably with his creatures unleſs he has given them immortal ſouls, and there be another world wherein he makes proper amends to the good, at leaſt for what they have ſuffered in this. The man is brought to the very brink of the precipice.

* Relig. of Nat. delineated pag. 205. et ſeq.

He cannot believe a God unjuſt, cruel, unreaſonable; but he may find it as difficult to believe a God who acts againſt his attributes, and the perfections of his nature, in one ſyſtem, only to have a reaſon the more for acting agreeably to them in another. In a word, he may be led by theology, if he does not ſtart back and revert to his former ways of thinking, from theiſm into atheiſm. Des Cartes and his followers have been juſtly cenſured for reſting the truth of God's exiſtence on their favorite proof, drawn from the idea which they aſſume that the mind can frame of an all-perfect Being, and neglecting or even rejecting every other. Divines are juſtly liable to the ſame cenſure; for tho' they admit all the proofs that eſtabliſh this great truth, yet they reſt the validity of them ultimately on the hypotheſis here mentioned, and expoſe ſuch as cannot take this hypotheſis for a demonſtration, to the danger of miſtaking the demonſtrations for hypotheſes.

XLVII.

THIS danger, great as it is, appears to ſuch a divine as Clarke, or is repreſented by him, to be none at all. He who does not believe the moral attributes of the Supreme Being, to be juſt ſuch as the doctor conceives them, and as eſſential to the divine nature as the natural attributes, has the doctor's conſent to believe no God at all. This is the angular ſtone of artificial theology. Grant to the divine that theſe attributes and the eternal reaſon of things are ſuch as he conceives them to be, and he will raiſe whatever ſchemes he pleaſes of divine œconomy. He will ſhew you what God was, and is obliged to do as creator and governor of the world *, and

* Dem. 131.

what

what he muſt do to correct his firſt plan, to ſet the diſorders and inequalities of it right, and to make the whole deſign appear at it's conſummation, what it does not appear at preſent, a deſign worthy of infinite wiſdom, juſtice and goodneſs. Refuſe to grant what he aſſumes, and he proves nothing with all his pomp of argument, and airs of demonſtration. This prophane application and impudent abuſe of reaſon is grown ſo common, that they who are guilty of it do not perceive it to be what it is; and that every little ſmatterer in artificial theology, who clambers up into a pulpit, talks of the nature, attributes and providence of the ſupreme, ineffable, incomprehenſible Being, with ſuch aſſurance as would be unpardonable preſumption in angels and archangels themſelves.

How ſhould it be leſs? How ſhould finite meaſure infinite? God's manner of knowing is ours no more than his manner of being. At leaſt, I think, that one of theſe propoſitions may be reduced, as well as the other, to abſurdity. But if his manner of knowing could be ſuppoſed, without abſurdity, the ſame, would it not be ſtill abſurd to ſuppoſe the objects of omniſcience as confined, as the objects of human ſcience? And yet they muſt be ſo, if the eternal reaſon of things, by which the divine wiſdom conducts them all, be juſt the ſame as it appears to be to the underſtanding of every rational being, and if God appeals to man himſelf for his conduct towards man. When God communicates any knowledge to any of his creatures, it is ſuch as he thinks neceſſary for them, and it is, therefore, communicated in a manner proportionable to their conceptions. Thus he has communicated to mankind in his works ſome knowledge of himſelf, more of the world they inhabit, and ſtill more of their ſtate, their duty, and their intereſt in it. What he has not given them the means of knowing, according to their manner of knowing, they are

ignorant of: and, therefore, tho' the particular reaſons and final cauſes of ſome few things relatively to themſelves, and to their ſyſtem, are known to them, yet even theſe are in many more inſtances unknown, and the reaſons relatively to GOD, for conſtituting theſe and all other things as they are conſtituted, can be known to GOD alone, who ſees them intuitively in himſelf, who is in himſelf the eternal reaſon. They cannot be objects of human underſtanding; for they are not conceivable by human ideas: and it is impoſſible to hear men with patience, when they endeavor to palm upon us, moſt impertinently, their notions of glory and honor for inſtance, and to make them paſs for the motives that determine GOD.

WE receive ideas from ſenſation and reflection, and we frame others by the ſeveral operations of our minds about theſe. Our minds have no other objects when they exerciſe the power of thinking, whatever that be. Theſe ideas do not go far into the extent of being, nor our power of thinking, by conſequence: and even in this extent our moſt ſimple ideas are ſometimes fallacious, our moſt complex ideas unſteady, and many of them imperfect and inadequate, confuſed and obſcure. There is ſomewhat more. Our knowledge does not extend even to all our ideas. Let me borrow two examples from Mr. LOCKE. "We have the ideas of a ſquare, a "circle, and equality, and yet ſhall never be able, perhaps, to "find a circle equal to a ſquare, and to know certainly that it "is ſo. We have the ideas of matter and thinking, but poſ-"ſibly ſhall never be able to know whether any mere material "being thinks or no." In like manner, and far more ſtrongly, it may be ſaid, that ſuppoſing us to have ideas of divine wiſdom, goodneſs and juſtice, there will be various phænomena ſtill, whereof we may have very clear and diſtinct ideas, and wherein we ſhall never be able to diſcover how wiſdom coin-

cides with goodneſs or juſtice, nor be able to make the application of the phænomena to the attributes. Thus the caſe would ſtand, ſuppoſing our ideas of theſe attributes in GOD as adequate as our ideas of a ſquare, a circle, equality, matter, and thought. But it grows much ſtronger, when we conſider how inadequate our ideas of theſe attributes muſt neceſſarily be, not only on account of the infinite diſtance between the divine and human nature, but on account of the numberleſs and to us unknown relations, reſpectively to all which the divine providence acts: which, if we did know them, we ſhould be unable to compare, and in which, therefore, the harmony of divine perfections would not be diſcernible by us. Upon the whole matter, we may conclude, ſafely from error, and in direct oppoſition to CLARKE, that goodneſs and juſtice in GOD cannot be conceived, without manifeſt preſumption and impiety, to be "the ſame as in the ideas we frame of "theſe perfections, when we conſider them in men, or when "we reaſon about them abſtractly in themſelves; but that in "the ſupreme Governor of the world they are ſomething "tranſcendent, and of which we cannot make any true judg-"ment, nor argue with any certainty about them."

THUS I think, and if I wanted any authority to juſtify me I could find it in Dr. BARROW, and in St. PAUL, whom I quote rather as a theologian than an inſpired apoſtle, ſince we conſider this whole matter on principles of reaſon and not of revelation. The former begins his ſermon, on a text taken from the epiſtle of the latter to the Romans*, how unſearchable are his judgments, and his ways paſt finding out? By obſerving that when GOD rejected the greateſt part of his antient people, for their refuſal to embrace the goſpel, and took the

* C. 11. v. 33.

gentiles

gentiles into his favor; the advocates of judaiſm argued againſt this proceeding from their ideas of wiſdom, as well as of juſtice, and the other moral attributes. "This proceeding, they ſaid, argued his former affection to them to have "been miſplaced. It impleaded his antient covenant, and "law, of imperfection. It ſupplanted his own deſigns. It "unravelled all that he had been doing for many ages." St. PAUL anſwered the advocates of judaiſm by other arguments taken from "ideas of general equity, of the nature of "GOD, of his attributes, of his relations to men, &c." But after he had ſteered his diſcourſe through all theſe rocks, which, I preſume, would have been ſuch for CLARKE, if they were ſuch for St. PAUL, "he thought it ſafe to caſt anchor, "that is to wind up the conteſt in this modeſt intimation, "that, whatever he could ſay, might not perhaps exhauſt the "difficulty, nor void all ſcruple; and that, therefore, in this, "and in all ſuch caſes, for entire ſatisfaction we ſhould have "recourſe to the incomprehenſible wiſdom of GOD, who frequently in the courſe of his providence ordereth things in "methods tranſcending our ability to diſcover or trace." St. PAUL did not pretend that his manner of accounting, for rejecting the Jews and calling in the gentiles, was infallible demonſtration, certain and neceſſary, even as certain as the attributes of GOD. Much leſs did he affirm, that if his arguments, concerning the diſpenſations of providence, were not a demonſtration, there was no demonſtration of the being of GOD: and yet, ſurely, beſides the difference between the apoſtle of the gentiles, and the miniſter of St. James's, it could not be harder to prove, that the rejection of the Jews, and the vocation of the gentiles were conſiſtent with the goodneſs and juſtice of GOD, than to prove that a future ſtate of rewards and puniſhments is neceſſary to juſtify his attributes, and to render his diſpenſations in this world conſiſtent with them.

Dr.

Dr. Barrow proceeds to conſider ſeveral reaſons, why we cannot clearly diſcern the entire congruity of providential diſpenſations to the divine attributes, as he expreſſes himſelf in another place. He could not cut the knot at once, nor bring the ſame charge as we have done directly againſt the preſumption of men of his own order. He was a divine, he was a preacher, he was to keep up the cant of the pulpit. He gives, therefore, ſome reaſons of a prudential kind, which may have determined God to veil his face with a cloud, and to wrap up his power in ſome obſcurity, ſuch for inſtance as theſe, that he may not confound our weak ſight, that he may exalt our faith, that he may appear God indeed, or that we may be well aſſured concerning a future account, and forced in our thoughts to recur thither for a re-ſolution of all emergent doubts and difficulties. Such flimſy ſtuff is a man like this obliged to vend, when he has put on a black gown and a band. But he lays his ſtreſs on another kind of reaſoning, and ſuch as is truly deciſive. "As the dealings of very wiſe," he ſays, and we may add, of very juſt and good men, "are ſometimes founded upon maxims, and admit juſtifications not obvious nor penetrable by vulgar conceit, ſo may God act according to rules of wiſdom and juſtice which it may be quite impoſſible by our faculties to apprehend, or with our means to deſcry. As there are natural modes of being and operation . . . . ſo there may be prudential and moral rules of proceeding, far above our reach . . . . peculiar objects of divine wiſdom, and not to be underſtood by any creature . . . . eſpecially by creatures who ſtand in the loweſt form of intelligence, one remove from beaſts. . . . . In fine, thoſe rules of equity and experience which we in our tranſactions with one another do uſe . . . . if they be applied to the dealings of God will be found very incongruous or deficient, the caſe being

vaſtly altered from that infinite diſtance in nature and ſtate between GOD and us, and from the immenſe differences which his relations towards us have from our relations to one another." Theſe two great divines are, you ſee, on my ſide. They are both of the ſame opinion that CLARKE cenſures: and if his cenſures were as juſt as they are dogmatical, St. PAUL himſelf would be one of thoſe men who take in reality the moral attributes of GOD entirely away, and who may on the ſame grounds deny his natural attributes *.

XLVIII.

IT is time to have done with CLARKE, eſpecially ſince I leave this part of the argument in much better hands than my own, in thoſe of Dr. BARROW and St. PAUL, who deny to him the very principle from which, as from a common ſource, all the accuſations of providence are deduced by him, by many other divines, and by the whole tribe of atheiſts. I proceed to take notice of another writer, and to examine another of thoſe aſſumptions which are employed by theſe men, whether divines or theiſts, to maintain their charge. That we are very incompetent judges of the moral attributes of GOD and of the eternal reaſon of things; that it is unpardonable preſumption in us to pronounce what both or either of them required that GOD ſhould do in the original conſtitution of our ſyſtem, or requires that he ſhould do in the government of it; theſe truths, I ſay, are ſo evident, that he who denies them, does not deſerve to be argued againſt any longer. "Quæ "perſpicua ſunt longa eſſe non debent." The determination of them ſhould in reaſon determine the whole diſpute. Infi-

* Evid. p. 26.

nite

nite wiſdom and infinite power have made things as they are: how goodneſs and juſtice required that they ſhould be made, is neither coram judice, nor to any rational purpoſe to enquire. For greater ſatisfaction, however, it may not be amiſs to ſhew that neither the ſtate of mankind in this life, in general, nor the lot of good and bad men, in particular, are ſuch as they have been repreſented to ſerve the purpoſes of ſome perſons; and that if they were ſuch, the hypotheſis of a life to come would not reſtore by reaſon the goodneſs and juſtice, which theſe men endeavor to deſtroy by appeals to reaſon and to paſſion.

The ſolemn author of the religion of nature delineated, whom Clarke had in his eye perhaps, when he deſcribed his fourth ſort of theiſts, whether this treatiſe had been then publiſhed or not, places himſelf on the ſame bench with Minos. Minos was the ſon of Jupiter, and the diſciple of his father. So Plato calls him, in order to inſinuate, as I believe, that nothing leſs than the wiſdom of the Supreme Being was ſufficient for the taſk aſſigned to this infernal judge. But I think, on recollection, that I muſt recall my words, and ſay that Wollaston places himſelf far above Minos. He judges God as well as man. Departed ſouls appear at the tribunal of the other, where they are puniſhed for the evil they have done, or recompenced for the evil they have ſuffered, in this world. But he erects this court of judicature, eſtabliſhes the general laws of it, as he judges the perfections of the divine nature required that they ſhould be eſtabliſhed, and diſtinguiſhes, and weighs the kinds of happineſs, or miſery, that fall to the ſhare of different men. Clear, and mixed happineſs, avoidable, and unavoidable miſery in the whole, or avoidable ſo far that the creature would chuſe rather to bear the remainder than miſs the proportion of happineſs: all which muſt

come into conſideration with the good and the evil men have done, at that judgment ſeat, where they are to be tried after death for what they have done in life.

In his attempt to prove, from the nature of an all-perfect Being, that God created the human ſoul immortal, becauſe the mortality of it does not conſiſt with reaſon, this author has the temerity to aſſert that he who ſays the contrary, muſt ſay in conſequence either that God is unreaſonable, unjuſt *, and cruel, or that no man has a greater ſhare of miſery unavoidable than of happineſs. Nay further, the exiſtence of an all-perfect Being depends ſo much, according to this theiſt, on the hypotheſis of a future ſtate †, that one ſingle inſtance of unfortunate virtue and of proſperous wickedneſs in this world would be to him a ſufficient argument for ſuch a ſtate. His reaſon is, that God cannot be unjuſt nor unreaſonable in any one inſtance, which is undoubtedly true. But on this ſuppoſition he would be ſo in one inſtance, if there was no future ſtate. One inſtance of theſe kinds, therefore, would have been to Wollaston a demonſtration againſt the exiſtence of an all-perfect Being, without the hypotheſis of ſuch a ſtate. This is ſtrange theiſm. Artificial theology is neither more dogmatical, nor more abſurd: and the belief of God's exiſtence hangs by a twine in both.

To ſupport this hypotheſis, he gives a moſt exaggerated deſcription of the misfortunes to which particular men are liable in this world, and a very ridiculous as well as exaggerated deſcription of the general, and uſual ſtate of mankind; both which are aſſumed to be inconſiſtent with the idea of a reaſonable cauſe. Let us conſider the laſt firſt, as the natural order

* p. 200. † p. 205.

ſeems to require. Whilſt the CLARKES and WOLLASTONS of the age accuſe the providence of GOD by arguments drawn from his nature, and from the eternal reaſon of things, both as imperfectly known to them as to you and me; let us defend this providence by arguments drawn from the nature of man, and the actual conſtitutions of the world, both equally well known to them and to us. Inſtead of hearkening to them, let us hearken to GOD, who ſpeaks to us in his works; and inſtead of pronouncing what it was right for him to do, believe all he has done, for that very reaſon, right. Let us be prepared to meet with ſeveral appearances, which we cannot explain, nor therefore reconcile to the ideas we endeavor to form of the divine perfections. But let us remember too that as the pretended ſcience of the men, againſt whom we diſpute, expoſes them to error, and as they render the great truths of theiſm doubtful, or at leaſt perplexed by blending them up in an imaginary ſcheme of divine œconomy; ſo we may be ſecure from error by a modeſt avowal of ignorance, where human knowledge ceaſes: and as the imperfections of created Beings prove them to be created, not ſelf-exiſtent, ſo the very deficiencies of the knowledge we have will be ſo many proofs of it's truth. They muſt be neceſſarily ſuch; for if it be true that infinite wiſdom and infinite power created, and govern the univerſe, it cannot but follow that ſome of the phænomena may be proportionable, and that others muſt be diſproportionable to our, and to every other finite underſtanding.

XLIX.

HAVING premiſed what I thought proper in this place, I obſerve, that the repreſentation made of the general ſtate of mankind, proves nothing, or proves too much.

much. It proves nothing if a gradation of animal beings appeared neceſſary or fit in the divine ideas, that is, to ſpeak leſs platonically and more rationally, to the ſupreme or divine reaſon and intention; for in that caſe why ſhould not we be the creatures we are? It proves or attempts to prove too much, if it be intended to prove that there is, or that there ſhould have been no ſuch chain of Being; for as we ſee that there is one almoſt from nonentity up to man, and have the moſt probable reaſons to perſuade us that it continues up to natures infinitely below the divine, but vaſtly ſuperior to the human; ſo there is ſurely no metaphyſical nor theological preſumption mad enough to aſſert that we are capable of knowing what the conſtitution, order, and harmony of an univerſe require.

But now, whether ſuch a gradation of being goes through the whole univerſe, or whether it be confined to our planet and ſtops at man, as the ignorance and pride of antient philoſophers induced them to believe, why is not the general ſtate of mankind conſiſtent with the idea of a reaſonable cauſe? This reaſonable cauſe may have produced ſuch creatures as we are either relatively to that chain, whereof we make a neceſſary link, or independently of it, and on other motives at which it is impoſſible we ſhould even gueſs. When objections are made to ſuch things as appear inconſiſtent with the perfections of an all-perfect Being in the Bible, the divine's anſwer is that of St. Paul, "ô altitudo!" The ſame divine objects to the works of God, and will not be anſwered by the ſame exclamations. My ignorance is made a ſufficient reaſon for ſubmitting implicitly to whatever I find in this book, as agreeable to the perfections of the Deity; and yet my ignorance is not allowed to be a reaſon for ſubmitting in the ſame manner to whatever I find in the book of nature that God has

has actually done, as agreeable to these perfections. This may be called very justly theological effronterie in the divine; and it is at least as absurd in the theist to ask, whether the conditions of humanity, the various objects which men pursue, and the various scenes of their lives from the cradle to the grave, compose an end worthy a first cause perfectly reasonable? The learned author might have asked with far less impropriety, whether the lowest employments, to which legislators and magistrates subject some of the persons they govern in political societies, compose an end worthy of them? The answer would be, that considered by themselves, they do not, but that considered, as parts of a general system, wherein the most minute are necessary to make the whole complete, they do: and that even considered by themselves, they are worthy at least of the persons to whom they are assigned.

In what I have written to you about human knowledge, I have insisted on one observation, which I will recall, and apply to the present case. The present case will justify the observation, and both together will discover very clearly the principal source from which all the perplexity, and all the tedious disputes concerning the origin of evil, and the supposed unjust dispensations of providence, as well as most other metaphysical and indeterminable questions, have arisen. The synthetical method of reasoning by arguments à priori, that is by arguments dedueed from principles assumed to be evident, is very commodious for many philosophical and theological purposes. But it may lead us imperceptibly into error, and we can never be sure that it leads us to truth, unless these principles are self-evident, or unless their evidence be demonstrated by the analytical method, that is, by arguments à posteriori, that is, by tracing it up from the known phænomena. Now, it happens unfortunately for truth, that philoso-

phers and divines catch at certain principles through levity, through a too implicit confidence, or through deſign, and argue dogmatically from them in the ſynthetical method without a due regard to the analytical. Thus, for inſtance, the wiſdom of God does not appear alike in all the phænomena; but, as far as we can diſcover, it appears in the greateſt and the leaſt to our aſtoniſhment, and the proofs of it multiply in an exact proportion to our diſcoveries, whilſt no one of theſe can be ſtrained into a repugnancy to it, for if any of them could, the caſe would be altered extremely. This wiſdom, therefore, is eſtabliſhed by the analytical method, and we may reaſon ſafely from our ideas of it in the ſinthetical. But the ſame cannot be ſaid of the moral attributes, which we aſcribe to the Supreme Being, according to our ideas of them. The ſuperiority we have over the reſt of the animals, that are our fellow inhabitants of this world, which is imaginary, perhaps, in ſome reſpects, and real, without doubt, on the whole, and ſeveral particular phænomena, wherein virtue is rewarded and vice puniſhed, give us theſe ideas. Now, whether the phænomena that give them, even thoſe wherein the final cauſes are the moſt apparent, and the moſt immediately relative to man, are to be deemed effects of the divine goodneſs and juſtice, in any other ſenſe than ſome of the ſame and ſeveral others are to be deemed effects of the divine goodneſs to the ſeveral ſpecies of animals; or whether they are all effects of the divine wiſdom exerting itſelf in every part relatively to the whole, may be diſputed. But it cannot be diſputed, and all ſides agree, that many of the phænomena are repugnant to theſe ideas of goodneſs and juſtice. They, therefore, who proceed on theſe principles, that goodneſs in God is juſt what we conceive it to be in our dealings with one another and in our abſtract notions of it, and that his juſtice is the ſame, that he made the world for the ſake of man, that he

he made man only to communicate happineſs to him, and that every one, who acts in contradiction to this happineſs, muſt be rigorouſly puniſhed by God himſelf, are ſo far from demonſtrating, that they have not the merit of framing a good hypotheſis; ſince no hypotheſis, which is contradicted evidently by any one of the phænomena, can be received as ſuch; and ſince it is in vain that they endeavor to rectify one by another, and to maintain the ſecond by the very proofs that deſtroy the firſt. If the firſt fails, the ſecond cannot ſtand: and he who expects to be believed, when he aſſerts what the phænomena can neither depoſe for, nor againſt, becauſe he finds no other way to maintain what he had aſſerted in oppoſition to them, expects a great deal more than reaſon will grant him.

What has been ſaid ſeems to be extremely plain: and they would conclude in this manner on any other occaſion, who are not aſhamed to do the very contrary on this. By ſetting themſelves free from the reſtraints of the analytical method, theſe reaſoners à priori reſemble very much one ſort of madmen. Some of theſe are ſo very mad that they loſe all uſe of their reaſon, and are as little able to deduce conſequences as they are to eſtabliſh principles. Others, again, deduce conſequences, and argue very juſtly, but are ſtill mad; becauſe they reaſon from principles that have no appearance of reality out of their own over-heated and diſordered imaginations. You will find inſtances of this kind without the trouble of going to Bedlam. You will find them in every form of life, even among thoſe who are reputed ſober and wiſe, and who really are ſo, except on ſome one particular ſubject. But you will find them principally in colleges and ſchools where different ſects have rendered this ſort of madneſs, which is occaſional elſewhere, both epidemical and traditional. Few have

been mad like Don Quixote, whilſt multitudes have been, and are, as mad in different walks of ſcience, as the Daniſh cabaliſt who inſtructed Borri. The man had great parts, was learned, was devout. He reaſoned extremely well; but he reaſoned like the reſt of his ſect on the ſuppoſition of an elementary people and on other cabaliſtical principles. Atheiſts ſeem to me to deſerve a place among the firſt ſort of madmen, and I apprehend that many divines and theiſts ought to be ranked among the ſecond.

They who approach the charm, are expoſed to the enchantment. How ſhould they eſcape who are bred up in it? I call it an enchantment, and I think, that men who have great ſtrength of genius, and great warmth of imagination, are often the moſt liable to be affected by it. The analytical method is the ſureſt road to truth, but it ſuits neither the purpoſe nor the temper of ſuch philoſophers. Where it may carry them they know not. It will carry them to truth, if it be well purſued, but it may carry them to truth that is inconſiſtent with the doctrines they are engaged by prejudice, or intereſt to maintain; and accordingly we ſee them fly off from it, like men who are afraid of their guide. It is troubleſome and tedious; for it requires often a difficult and long induction of particulars: and they are in haſte to arrive at ſcience, or what they take for ſcience. It ſtops, in many caſes, ſhort, and diſappoints their curioſity. They ſcorn to ſtop where it ſtops; and, therefore, they take a bold leap, from certain ideas that ſeem to them clear and diſtinct, to the firſt principles of things, as Fontenelle ſays of Des Cartes, fooliſhly to be ſure, ſince he intended to make his panegyric, and to give him the preference to Newton.

All

All this may be applied to the perſons we ſpeak of here; and there is no ſubject, on which the enchantment has had ſo much force, nor has prevailed ſo long as on this of the origin of evil, of the moral attributes of God, and of the diſpenſations of providence. This was a chaos of metaphyſical notions three thouſand years ago, and it is ſo ſtill. Some very able writers have endeavored to account for the origin of evil conſiſtently with the received notions of the moral attributes of God, and of his deſign in creating man; but I doubt that the two famous queſtions are ſtill unanſwered by them. "If "there is a God infinitely good as well as powerful, how "comes it that there is any ſuch thing as evil in the world? "If he is infinitely juſt, how comes it that the virtuous have "a ſhare and ſometimes the greateſt of this evil?" The hypotheſis of two principles, which had been invented by the moſt antient of the eaſtern philoſophers, and was revived by Manes, and others, contained many abſurdities, and did not ſolve the difficulty, ſince it might be aſked, why did the good God create man at all, if he could not create and govern him independently of the evil god? The hypotheſis of the fall of man, for ſuch it is under a philoſophical conſideration, will ſerve the purpoſe as little; ſince it is impoſſible to render that aſſumed indulgence of God to the free-will of man, which defeated the original deſign of God, plunged man into a ſtate of miſery as ſoon as he was created, and obliged the divine goodneſs to have recourſe to the expedient of a redemption by the blood of his own Son---ſince it is impoſſible, I ſay, to render this agreeable to our ideas of goodneſs or even of wiſdom.

The firſt of theſe hypotheſes has been exploded long ago. The ſecond muſt be defended as well as it can, ſince it is made

the foundation of the chriſtian ſyſtem. But, however the introduction of evil may be accounted for by this ſacred tradition, and by much ingenious argumentation to the reaſon of mankind; every divine, and ſeveral theiſts, endeavor to account for the exiſtence and diſtribution of it by another hypotheſis, which is as ancient as either of the former, and which muſt have been invented, ſince it was not revealed to the Ægyptians, and other people, any more than to the Iſraelites, not only for a political, but for a philoſophical purpoſe, and to ſerve for an anſwer to the two atheiſtical queſtions. It is with this hypotheſis, conſidered independently of revelation, that we have to do here. We are to examine whether it reconciles the phænomena to the ideas we have of goodneſs and juſtice, by aſſuming that this world is nothing more than the porch or entry into another *.

L.

AS the men who maintain this hypotheſis neglect the phænomena when they pretend to determine the moral attributes of God, ſo they overſtrain them with much affectation and unfairneſs when they pretend to demonſtrate a future ſtate. The author of the religion of nature delineated, that I may mention one particularly, does this in ſuch a manner that his exaggerations become burleſque †. According to him, "the general ſtate of mankind is ſcarce conſiſtent "with the idea of a reaſonable cauſe, becauſe we are born with "the labor of our mothers; becauſe we are liable to hunger, "thirſt, heat, cold, and indiſpoſitions of various kinds; and "becauſe one generation drops off, and another ſprings up,

* Rel. of nat. p. 207. † Ib. p. 206, 207, 209.

"that

" that is, becauſe as we are born, ſo we die. Children, we " trifle away our time at play; or we are ſent to ſchool, and " ſubmitted to diſcipline. Men, we are expoſed to difficulties, " and ſurrounded with cares. There are inhuman or vicious " huſbands, falſe or peeviſh wives, refractory or unhappy " children. Many can never obtain a comfortable livelihood; " many of thoſe that do, break; and even when their affairs " go on proſperouſly, their families increaſe, and new occa- " ſions of ſolicitude are introduced by this increaſe. Under " ſuch grievances we lie during the beſt part of life, and " when we grow old we grow infirm. In ſhort, phyſical " and moral evil intermixed with a few tranſitory and uncer- " tain enjoyments, not worth enjoying, make up the whole " ſyſtem of our lives, at the laſt ſtage of which, if we are not " taken away ſooner by death, fainting, tottering, and " bending to the earth, we fall into the grave of ourſelves." Such, and far more miſerable, (for I omit among others thoſe who labor under incurable diſtempers, and who ſubſiſt by begging, borrowing, or ſhifts as bad as theſe) is the ſtate of mankind repreſented to be; after which the pathetic writer concludes, and muſt man end here? Is this the period of his being? Is this all? The author I quote is ſo tranſported by the torrent of his eloquence, and by ſuch reflections as theſe, that he raiſes in his own mind what I think he will raiſe in that of no ſober reader, a ſort of indignation againſt the ſtate wherein almighty GOD has placed us, and againſt the order of his providence. On this he grounds an expectation of life and immortality in a better ſtate, and, on this expectation, an argument that there will be ſuch a ſtate.

IN this rapture he retires to ſome ſolitary walk, and there far from noiſe, perhaps, but certainly not free from prejudice,

he meditates for our inſtruction. "He thinks himſelf ſure "that he is above lifeleſs matter, above the vegetative "tribe, and above the ſenſitive animals that he ſees. He "has not only immediate ſenſations, but ideas of an higher "order. He can make excurſions into futurity; he had "almoſt ſaid that he could, by ſtrict thinking, get into "another world beforehand. Can he be made capable of "ſuch great expectations only to be diſappointed at laſt? "Can he have ſuch overtures of immortality, if, after all, "there is no ſuch thing? He makes great improvements "in knowledge which he has often no opportunity of ſhew-"ing here. Muſt they not be preparations for another "world, wherein he may ſhew them? Can the author of "his reaſoning faculties be himſelf ſo unreaſonable as to "give them to no purpoſe? By the exaltation of his reaſon, "and by the practice of virtue, he approaches to an higher "manner of being, and taſtes already ſomething ſpiritual, "and above this world. Muſt his private acts of religion "be all loſt? Can GOD have ſo little regard for him who "has ſo much for GOD?"

IN this ſpecimen, which is very faithfully extracted, we have an example of the ſecond ſort of madneſs mentioned above. The man who writ all this nonſenſe was a man of parts, of learning, a philoſopher, and a geometrician. But he made one miſtake in the delirium of metaphyſics. Inſtead of reaſoning about a creature of GOD's, he reaſoned about one of his own creation. When theſe learned lunatics conceive men to be nearly what they are, they pull down the divinity nearly to the ſame level, and frame their notions of GOD's proceedings with them on thoſe of their proceedings with one another. When they think more worthily of the Supreme Being, and raiſe their ideas of an all-perfect nature

as

as high as they are able, they raiſe their ideas of the human nature in a certain proportion to theſe; ſo that GOD and man are, in all their reaſonings, within degrees of compariſon. Thus Mr. WOLLASTON has done in his truths relating to the deity, and in thoſe relating to a private man. He raiſes our conceptions in the firſt, as high as they can be raiſed, and then loſes himſelf, and leaves his reader to be loſt, in the incomprehenſibility of the divine nature, as they muſt needs be. He does not, indeed, flatter the human in the ſecond as groſly as ſome writers, who endeavor to impoſe on us againſt the intuitive knowledge which every one may have of himſelf; but he inſiſts ſo much on the ſpirituality and immortality of the ſoul, and on the unſuitableneſs of the condition to the importance of mankind, that he gives ground ſufficient to ſtand upon to thoſe fulſome panegyriſts of humanity, who conſider man as the image of GOD, the final cauſe of the creation, and the principal object among created beings, even above angels, of the divine care and ſolicitude.

BUT, after all their endeavors to make of man a being ſuperior to the whole animal kind, rather than a ſuperior ſpecies of the ſame kind, man will appear what he really is to every unprejudiced mind. In vain will they endeavor to perſuade any ſuch that the natural ſtate of mankind is unnatural, if I may ſay ſo; that is, a ſtate neither agreeable to the nature of GOD himſelf, nor to that nature wherewith he has dignified man. In vain will they endeavor to perſuade any ſuch that the conditions of humanity are imperfections in the ſyſtem; and that, in the works of GOD, as in thoſe of men, whatever falls ſhort of the idea of the workman, or is not proportionate to the value of the materials he prepares in one eſſay, may be rectified in another inſtance. It is not only true but obvious, that man is connected by his nature, and, therefore, by the

deſign of the Author of all nature with the whole tribe of animals, and ſo cloſely with ſome of them that the diſtance between his intellectual faculties and theirs, which conſtitutes as really, tho' not ſo ſenſibly as figure, the difference of ſpecies, appears, in many inſtances, ſmall, and would, probably, appear ſtill leſs, if we had the means of knowing their motives, as we have of obſerving their actions. The connection of all animal, and, by conſequence, of human with vegetable life is more remote. But there is ſuch a connection; and it will be manifeſt to him who conſiders how vegetables are produced, how they grow up, how they ripen, floriſh for a time, wither and die, how many wants they have, ſuch as nouriſhment, culture and ſhelter, for inſtance, as well as to how many diſtempers and injuries they are expoſed, in all which circumſtances their connection with the animal kind is too apparent to be denied. Tho' man is an animated material, being capable of beginning motion, and of many other modifications of thought, both ſingle, and in ſeries; yet, however theſe mental powers were communicated to him, and in degrees ſtill more imperfect to other animals, his ſyſtem and theirs are founded alike in mere matter, and when we look at one another, the firſt ideas we receive are thoſe of extenſion and figure, the parts of which, like thoſe of any other clod of earth, are liable to ſeparation, and to a diſſolution of the form. Nay, there is a further analogy between animated and inanimated bodies. The former have, by inſtinct, a ſort of moral gravitation to one another, by which they adhere together in ſociety. I will not apply inſtinct to the latter; but this I may ſay, that a force as unknown as inſtinct, produces a gravitation of the ſeveral parts of matter to each other, and keeps them together in a kind of phyſical ſociety.

HORNOR.

THE whole world, nay the whole univerſe is filled with beings which are all connected in one immenſe deſign. The ſenſitive inhabitants of our globe, like the dramatis perſonæ, have different characters, and are applied to different purpoſes of action in every ſcene. The ſeveral parts of the material world, like the machines of a theatre, were contrived not for the actors, but for the action: and the whole order and ſyſtem of the drama would be diſordered and ſpoiled, if any alteration was made in either. The nature of every creature, his manner of being, is adapted to his ſtate here, to the place he is to inhabit, and, as we may ſay, to the part he is to act. If man was a creature inferior or ſuperior to what he is, he would be a very prepoſterous creature in this ſyſtem. GULLIVER's horſes made a very abſurd figure in the place of men, and men would make one as abſurd in the place of horſes. I do not think that philoſophers have ſhewn in every inſtance why every thing is what it is, and as it is, or that nothing could be in any one caſe otherwiſe than it is without producing a greater inconveniency to the whole than the particular inconveniency that would be removed. But I am ſure this has been proved in ſo many inſtances, that it is trifling, as well as prophane, to deny it in any. We complain often of our ſenſes, and ſometimes of our reaſoning faculties. Both are defective, weak, fallible: and yet, if the former were more extenſive, more acute, and more nice, they would not anſwer the purpoſes of human life, they would be abſolutely inconſiſtent with them. Juſt ſo, if our reaſoning faculties were more perfect than they are, the order of intellectual beings would be broken unneceſſarily, and man would be raiſed above his proper form without any real advantage to himſelf, ſince the reaſon he has is ſufficient for him in the ſtate allotted to him; and ſince higher faculties, and greater degrees

of knowledge would on one hand increaſe his preſumption, and yet on the other would rather excite than ſate his curioſity, by ſhewing him more clearly the extent of his ignorance

Wollaston pretends to reduce every one who does not adopt the hypotheſis of rewards and puniſhments in a future ſtate, to this dilemma: "no rational creature is unavoidably "miſerable, or God is an unreaſonable and cruel being." But, in the firſt place, who told this writer, or how does he know that there are any rational creatures unavoidably miſerable? The whole ſtory of mankind tells him ſo, and his own ſenſes ſhew him that it is ſo, and on theſe ſuppoſed authorities he makes ſuch a ſtate of miſery to be that of almoſt all mankind. I might have ſaid of all mankind abſolutely: for tho' he allows that ſome are more and ſome are leſs miſerable than others; yet in the enumeration he makes of unavoidable human miſeries he includes many that are unavoidable indeed, but that do not conſtitute miſery, either when they come ſeparately, or when ſeveral of them come together. They are inconveniencies at moſt, to which every man is liable. Every man is liable to catch cold, and like other animals, to be afflicted with various bodily diſtempers. Every man, and he moſt, who is deemed commonly to be the furtheſt removed from miſery, is expoſed to cares, to troubles, to diſappointments, &c. Our author is fond on this occaſion of the word miſery, it carries a ſtronger idea along with it, and ſerves the purpoſe of exaggeration better. But what is miſery? Let us, who have no other purpoſe to ſerve than that of truth, determine our ideas with greater preciſion. As I take happineſs to be a continued permanent ſeries of agreeable ſenſations or of pleaſure, ſo I take miſery to be a continued permanent ſeries of the contrary: and ſuch miſery has never been brought, I believe, on any man neceſſarily,

neceſſarily, and unavoidably, as a conſequence of the general ſtate wherein GOD has placed mankind.

PARTICULAR occaſional evils, phyſical and moral, are conſequences of this ſtate, no doubt, and ſuch as we are able to ſhew that they could not be prevented in the beſt of all material ſyſtems. The courſe of things rolls on through a vaſt variety of contingent events, for ſuch they are to our apprehenſions, according to the firſt impreſſion of motion given to it, and under the direction of an univerſal providence. This perpetual flux, and the viciſſitudes it creates, in what we call the fortune of men, bring along with them both good and evil. Human life is checquered variouſly with both; and as the good has often ſome alloy, ſo the evil is ſoftened by many circumſtances, even by habit, and above all, by hope, that cordial drop which ſweetens every bitter potion, even the laſt.

THE ſaying of the epicureans is true of all ſorts of evil. If it is violent, it ſpends itſelf, or it puts an end ſoon to him who ſuffers it. If it is moderate, it is tolerable, it may be compenſated, or the ſenſe of it may wear out. Thus a dancing, drunken, ſmoaking revel makes ample amends to the ſavage for all the wants he has ſuffered, and for all the pains and perils to which he has been expoſed. Thus the galley-ſlave ſings whilſt he is chained to an oar, and thus might they ſing who worked in the golden mines of the upper Ægypt, and for whom as well as their relations and poor children Mr. WOLLASTON is moved to ſo much compaſſion. I ſhould wonder, when he was in Ægypt, that he did not quote a tradition from the Bible as well as from DIODORUS, if I did not conſider that he gave probably more credit to the prophane than to the ſacred hiſtory, and lament the fate of the Iſraelites who were obliged to make bricks without ſtraw, and whoſe

backs were ſcourged by their taſk maſters. The real evils, that men ſuffer, are not in truth ſo great as they appear in theſe exaggerated repreſentations of them, and very often, perhaps, to the eye of a ſpectator: nay, the greateſt of them are not greater than thoſe which men impoſe voluntarily on themſelves, whilſt they complain loudly of evils far leſs, which the conditions of humanity impoſe on them. I might bring examples from thoſe who row in galleys, or dig in mines, for hire; from thoſe who condemn themſelves to paſs their whole lives in auſterities like the fathers of La Trappe, or in torments like the Faquirs of the eaſt, on motives of ſuperſtition; from thoſe in whom a turn of imagination can take off the fear of death, and make them court it before it's time, like the followers of Odin, who ſung the praiſe of it in their hymns, witneſs the ode of good king Lodbrog, and had no better a reaſon for it than the hope of drinking beer in the ſculls of their enemies at the palace of Odin.

Thus do men frequently embrace, by choice, the very evils they complain of, when they happen to them in the uſual courſe of things, and ſometimes even death itſelf, for which they have, by nature, the ſtrongeſt averſion. Thus too they devote their whole lives to real and conſtant miſery, which is no part of the general natural ſtate of mankind. In ſhort, their greateſt evils are from themſelves, not from God, which might be ſhewn in innumerable inſtances. True it is, that they are ſometimes involved in general calamities, which they can neither foreſee nor prevent, ſuch as inundations, earthquakes, peſtilences, and the entire devaſtations of kingdoms or provinces by ſavage and barbarous people, like the Huns of old, or the Spaniards in later ages. But theſe calamities are rare. They may be conſidered as chaſtiſements; for chaſtiſements are reaſonable, when there are any to be amended.

by partaking in them, or by being, at leaſt, ſpectators of them. They may be conſidered as the mere effects, natural tho' contingent, of matter and motion in a material ſyſtem, put into motion under certain general laws. If they are ſeen in the firſt light, they ſhould teach mankind to adore, and to fear that providence which governs the world by particular as well as general diſpenſations. If they are ſeen in the ſecond, they ſhould ſuggeſt ſome other reflections, which are not without their utility neither.

NECESSARY agents employ all their powers conformably to the laws of nature, in promoting the ſame end, that is, in carrying on the phyſical ſyſtem. So rational agents ſhould employ all their faculties in preſerving the order of the moral ſyſtem, which reaſon diſcovers to be their common duty, and reaſon and experience to be their common intereſt. There are great deviations in both, with a double difference relatively to the ſtate of mankind. The former are wholly indepenent, the latter in great meaſure dependent on man, notwithſtanding the ſtrength of his paſſions, and the weakneſs of his reaſon. The former are not only rare, and the latter frequent; but the conſequences of the latter become much more fatal to the happineſs of mankind in general, than thoſe of the former. From hence it reſults very evidently that the wiſdom of GOD, which you may call his goodneſs, has given man by what is in his power very ample means to make himſelf amends for that which is out of his power. Atheiſts and divines find fault with the whole. They cannot, or they will not conceive, that the ſeeming imperfection of the parts is neceſſary to the real perfection of the whole. The entire ſcheme of the works of GOD muſt be altered to pleaſe them. Nothing, even inconvenient to theſe delicate perſons, muſt be ſuffered in it. They muſt be phyſically invulnerable, and morally impeccable,

or the divine providence muſt interpoſe continually to ſhield every particular man from evils of one ſort, and to check him, like the dæmon of SOCRATES, when he is about to commit thoſe of another. This is all they modeſtly require; and of the want of this they complain perpetually, as they pretend, the divine at leaſt does ſo, that they have a right to do, becauſe GOD appeals to man for the equity of his proceedings.

LET us be convinced, however, in oppoſition to atheiſts and divines, that the general ſtate of mankind in the preſent ſcheme of providence is a ſtate not only tolerable, but happy. Without having WOLLASTON's ballance, wherein he weighs happineſs and miſery even to grains and ſcruples, we may pronounce that there is much more good than evil in it; and prove what we pronounce even by his authority, and that of all thoſe who deny it like him, if any ſuch authority can be wanting. It is plain that every man has more good than evil in actual enjoyment, or in proſpect, ſince every man prefers exiſting as he is to non-exiſtence, and ſince none of them, not thoſe who ſuffer the worſt accidents in life, are willing to abandon it, and to go out of the ſtate theſe declaimers repreſent to be ſo miſerable. The propoſition may be advanced thus generally, becauſe there are very few examples to the contrary, and thoſe are of men run mad by diſtemper, or made ſo by ſome prevailing enthuſiaſm. Neither will it avail to ſay that the deſire of life and the fear of death are, one the greateſt imperfection, and the other the greateſt evil of our human ſtate; ſince, whatever they are, and from whence ſoever they ariſe, they would leſſen in all caſes, and ceaſe in many, if the condition of mankind were truly ſuch as it is repreſented. What our author's circumſtances were of any kind I am ignorant. But whatever they were, I am perſuaded, you will be of my opinion, that any charitable perſon who had offered

offered to cut his throat, in order only to deliver him from the miſeries he complained of in ſuch lamentable terms, would have been very ill received. But I haſten to wind up and to conclude the hints, for they are no more, which occur to me, and which I think proper to give you concerning the general and uſual ſtate of mankind.

LI.

I SAY then, that if men come helpleſs into the world like other animals; if they require even longer than other animals to be nurſed and educated by the tender inſtinct of their parents, and if they are able much later to provide for themſelves; it is becauſe they have more to learn and more to do; it is becauſe they are prepared for a more improved ſtate and for greater happineſs. Senſe and inſtinct direct all animals to their ſeveral ends. Some of them profit more by experience, acquire more knowledge, and think and reaſon better than others both in different ſpecies and in the ſame. Man is at the head of theſe; he profits ſtill more by experience, he acquires ſtill more knowledge, he thinks and reaſons better than all other animals; for he who is born too ſtupid to do ſo, is not a human creature: he ſinks into an inferior ſpecies, tho' he be made after the image of man. Man is able by his intellectual ſuperiority to foreſee, and to provide more effectually againſt the evils that threaten him, as well as to procure to himſelf the neceſſaries, the comforts, and the pleaſures of life. All his natural wants are eaſily ſupplied, and GOD has proportioned them to the abilities of thoſe who remain in the loweſt form of rational creatures. The Tartar under his tent, and the Savage in his hut, enjoys them. Such is the general ſtate of mankind. Of what then do we complain? His happineſs

exceeds that of his fellow-creatures, at leaſt as much as the dignity of his nature exceeds the dignity of theirs: and is not this enough?

We ought to think that it is enough: and yet God has done more for us. He has made us happy, and he has put it into our power to make ourſelves happier by a due uſe of our reaſon, which leads us to the practice of moral virtue and of all the duties of ſociety. We are deſigned to be ſocial, not ſolitary creatures. Mutual wants unite us: and natural benevolence and political order, on which our happineſs depends, are founded in them. This is the law of our nature; and tho' every man is not able for different reaſons to diſcern it, or diſcerning it to apply it, yet ſo many are able to do this that they ſerve as guides to the reſt. The reſt ſubmit, for the advantages they find in this ſubmiſſion. They learn by experience that ſervitude to law is real liberty, and that the regulation of pleaſure is real happineſs. Pleaſures are the objects of ſelf-love, happineſs that of reaſon. Reaſon is ſo far from depriving us of the firſt, that happineſs conſiſts in a ſeries of them: and as this can be neither attained nor enjoyed ſecurely out of ſociety, a due uſe of our reaſon makes ſocial and ſelf-love coincide, or even become in effect the ſame. The condition wherein we are born and bred, the very condition ſo much complained of, prepares us for this coincidence, the foundation of all human happineſs; and our whole nature, appetite, paſſion, and reaſon concur to promote it. As our parents loved themſelves in us, ſo we love ourſelves in our children, and in thoſe to whom we are moſt nearly related by blood. Thus far inſtinct improves ſelf-love. Reaſon improves it further. We love ourſelves in our neighbours, and in our friends too, with Tully's leave; for if friendſhip is formed by a kind of ſympathy, it is cultivated

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by good offices. Reaſon proceeds. We love ourſelves in loving the political body whoſe members we are, and we love ourſelves when we extend our benevolence to all mankind.

THESE are the genuine effects of reaſon, theſe are the purpoſes for which it was given us, and nothing more trifling, nor more abſurd, can be found in the writings of thoſe who have preſumed to cenſure the providence of GOD, than what TULLY puts into the mouth of COTTA, in the third book of the nature of the gods, on this occaſion. "I know not," is this pontiff made to ſay, "whether it had not been better "for mankind to have had no reaſoning faculties at all, ſince "they are hurtful to ſo many, and profitable to ſo few, than "to have had them ſo bountifully and ſo profuſely beſtowed*." Fooliſh and prophane! Fire ſerves for ſeveral neceſſary uſes, among the reſt to warm us, and ſenſitive experience teaches us to diſtinguiſh between warming and burning, in the manner and degree wherein we employ it. Shall we renounce the uſe of it, and complain that there is ſuch an element, becauſe it burns us when we employ it ill, or when we neglect, in employing it well, the precautions and attentions that are neceſſary? Juſt ſo (for we may transfer this material image to an intellectual ſubject, much more properly than ſuch images are uſually transferred to ſuch ſubjects by metaphyſicians) juſt ſo, I ſay, human reaſon is given for ſeveral neceſſary uſes, and principally to lead us to all the happineſs we are made capable of attaining, by a proper application of it, which rational experience is ſufficient to teach us. This compariſon is more juſt than that which COTTA makes, and BAYLE has copied, of the

* Haud ſcio an melius fuerit humano generi motum iſtum celerem cogitationis, acumen, ſolertiam, quam rationem vocamus, quoniam peſtifera ſit multis, admodum paucis ſalutaris, non dari omnino, quam tam munificé, et tam largé dari.

Supreme Being to a phyſician, who preſcribes wine to a patient that he knows will drink it too ſtrong, and periſh by the uſe of it. Neither the ſtrength of our reaſon, nor the too frequent uſe of it, but the contrary, are to be apprehended: and if the ſick man's wine muſt be mingled with water to do him good, reaſon, the medicina animi, muſt be employed pure and unmixed. The other ſimilies, which theſe academicians employ, are as impertinent as this, and might be ſhewn very eaſily to be ſo, if it were worth our while. But no man, who is not already devoid of reaſon, will be induced by them to renounce this noble gift, wherein the dignity of our nature conſiſts, becauſe it becomes hurtful when we apply it ill; or through negligence, or through affectation, or through deſign, even when we apply it well. It was applied rather impertinently than hurtfully, to maintain ſtoical apathy; for it was not given to deſtroy, but to direct and govern the paſſions; to make them as beneficial as they are neceſſary in the human ſyſtem; to make a Piso of a Cataline *, and a Brutus, I mean the firſt, of a Cæsar. But it was applied very hurtfully, indeed, and it is ſo ſtill, by thoſe who employ all the reaſon they have to corrupt the morals of men, to bribe, to ſeduce, to argue, to deceive, or to force them out of their properties, or their liberties, and to make an whole community become the vaſſals of a faction of men, or of one man. This in politics. In religion it was applied very hurtfully, and it is ſo ſtill by atheiſts and divines, whilſt the former endeavor by ſophiſm and declamation to cenſure the works of God, and the order of his providence, to deſtroy the belief of his exiſtence, and to baniſh all ſenſe of religion; and whilſt the latter, who join very heartily in the ſame cenſure, would be thought to juſtify the divine attributes againſt the common

* Frugi.

accu-

accuſation, and to promote the intereſts of religion by this juſtification.

A moſt unneceſſary juſtification ſurely! if they did not make it neceſſary; ſince GOD leads us by the natural ſtate, in which we ſtand at firſt, into the road of happineſs, and leaves us to the conduct of a ſufficient guide, that is, of our reaſon, afterwards. It would be falſe to ſay, as SENECA ſays, ſomewhere in one of the rants of the portic, that we owe our virtue to ourſelves, not to GOD. It would be equally falſe to ſay, that we owe our happineſs to ourſelves, not to GOD. But this may be ſaid with truth, that GOD, when he gave us reaſon, left us to our free-will to make a proper, or improper, uſe of it: ſo that we are obliged to our Creator for a certain rule and ſufficient means of arriving at happineſs, and have none to blame but ourſelves, when we fail of it. It is not reaſon, but perverſe will, that makes us fall ſhort of attainable happineſs. The rule is ſo certain, and the means ſo ſufficient, that they who deviate from them are ſelf-condemned at the time they do ſo; for he, who breaks the laws of nature, or of his country, will concur to preſerve them inviolate from others. As a member of ſociety, he acknowledges the general rule. As an individual, he endeavors to be a particular exception to it. He is determined in both caſes by ſelf-love. That active principle, inflaming and inflamed by his paſſions, preſſes on to the apparent good which is the object of them: and if reaſon, a leſs active principle, which, inſtead of impelling, requires to be impelled, and to whom it belongs to be conſulted in the choice, as well as in the purſuit, of an object, is called in, it is called in too late, and is made the drudge of the will, predetermined by paſſion. Thus it happens, that ſelf-love and ſocial are divided, and ſet in oppoſition to one another in the conduct of particular men, whilſt, in the making laws, and in

the regulation of government, they continue to be the ſame. As long as they do ſo, the happineſs of mankind is abundantly provided for and ſecured, in their ſeveral ſocieties; and, notwithſtanding the phyſical evils to which the members of theſe ſocieties may ſtand ſometimes expoſed, every reaſonable man, every man who is not a diſciple of ſuch a whining philoſopher as WOLLASTON, nor ſuch a preſumptuous divine as CLARKE, will confeſs that ſuch a ſtate is as happy not only as human eye ever ſaw, or human ear ever heard, but as the heart of man can conceive to belong to humanity; and much more happy than creatures, but one degree above thoſe whom they deſpiſe, could expect to be.

IT is true, indeed, that governments ſhift and change not only their adminiſtrations, but their forms. Good princes and magiſtrates carry on the work of GOD, and by making men better make them happier. When theſe are corrupt, the infection ſpreads. They corrupt the people, the people them; ſocial love is extinguiſhed, and paſſion divides thoſe whom reaſon united. When the abuſe is confined within certain bounds, the condition of many men may be happy, and that of all may be ſtill tolerable: and when the abuſe exceeds ſuch degrees, and when confuſion or oppreſſion becomes intolerable, we are to conſider that they who ſuffer deſerve to ſuffer. Good government cannot grow exceſſively bad, nor liberty be turned into ſlavery, unleſs the body of a people co-operate to their own ruin. The laws, by which ſocieties are governed regard particulars, and individuals are rewarded, or puniſhed, by men. But the laws by which the moral as well as the phyſical world is governed, regard generals: and communities are rewarded or puniſhed by GOD according to the nature of things in the ordinary courſe of his providence, and even without any extraordinary interpoſition.

Look round the world antient and modern, you will obſerve the general ſtate of mankind to increaſe in happineſs, or decline to miſery, as virtue or vice prevails in their ſeveral ſocieties. Thus the author of nature has been pleaſed to conſtitute the human ſyſtem, and he muſt be mad who thinks that any of the atheiſtical, theological, or philoſophical makers, and menders of worlds, could have conſtituted it better. The ſaying of ALPHONSUS, king of Caſtile, who found ſo many faults in the conſtruction of the material world that he pronounced himſelf able to have given the ſupreme architect a better plan, has been heard with horror by every theiſt. Shall we hear without horror the men ſpoken of here, when they find fault with the moral, as well as phyſical plan, when they found accuſations againſt the goodneſs, juſtice, and wiſdom of GOD, merely on their pride, when they aſſume, on no other foundation, that man is or ought to have been the final cauſe of the creation, and rail as heartily at providence as PLUTARCH repreſents EPICURUS to have done; in ſhort, when they go ſo far as to impute to GOD the introduction or permiſſion of thoſe very evils which neither GOD is anſwerable for, if I may uſe ſuch an expreſſion, nor nature, nor reaſon, but our own perverſe wills, and the wrong elections we make?

I cannot hear any part of this without horror; and therefore, if I had walked with WOLLASTON * in ſome retired field, my meditations would have been very different from his, more juſt, and more reverential towards the Supreme Being. I ſhould have been very ſure that neither lifeleſs matter nor the vegetative tribe have any reflex thoughts, nor any thoughts at all. I ſhould have been convinced that the faculty of thinking is given to ſenſitive animals, as we call them, in a lower degree than to man. But I ſhould not have been convinced

* Ibid. p. 209.

that

that they have the power of exerciſing it in reſpect of preſent objects only. The contrary would appear to me, on ſome occaſions, as manifeſt in them, or in ſome of them, as it appears on others, and on more, in the man who is born dumb. I ſhould feel the ſuperiority of my ſpecies, but I ſhould acknowledge the community of our kind. I ſhould rouze in my mind a grateful ſenſe of theſe advantages above all others, that I am a creature capable of knowing, of adoring, and worſhiping my creator, capable of diſcovering his will in the law of my nature, and capable of promoting my happineſs by obeying it. I ſhould acknowledge thankfully that I am able, by the ſuperiority of my intellectual faculties, much better than my fellow-creatures, to avoid ſome evils and to ſoften others, which are common to us and to them. I ſhould confeſs that as I proved myſelf more rational than they by employing my reaſon to this purpoſe, ſo I ſhould prove myſelf leſs rational by repining at my ſtate here, and by complaining that there are any unavoidable evils. I ſhould confeſs that neither perfect virtue, nor perfect happineſs, are to be found among the ſons of men: and that we ought to judge of the continuance of one, as we may judge of our perſeverance in the other, according to a maxim in the ethics of CONFUCIUS; not by this, that we never fall from either, ſince in that ſenſe there would be no one good nor no one happy man in the world; but by this, that when we do fall we riſe again, and purſue the journey of life, in the ſame road. Let us purſue it contentedly, and learn that, as the ſofteſt pillow on which we can lay our heads has been ſaid by MONTAGNE to be ignorance, we may ſay more properly that it is reſignation. He alone is happy, and he is truly ſo, who can ſay, welcome life whatever it brings! Welcome death whatever it is! "Aut tranſfert, aut finit." If the former, we change our ſtate, but we are ſtill the creatures of the ſame

GOD.

God. He made us to be happy here. He may make us happier in another syſtem of Being. At leaſt, this we are ſure of, we ſhall be dealed with according to the perfections of his nature, not according to the imperfections of our own. Reſignation in this inſtance cannot be hard to one who thinks worthily of God, nor in the other, except to one who thinks too highly of man. That you, or I, or even Wollaston himſelf, ſhould return to the earth from whence we came, to the dirt under our feet, or be mingled with the aſhes of thoſe herbs and plants, from which we drew nutrition whilſt we lived, does not ſeem any indignity offered to our nature, ſince it is common to all the animal kind: and he, who complains of it as ſuch, does not ſeem to have been ſet, by his reaſoning faculties, ſo far above them in life, as to deſerve not to be levelled with them at death. We were like them before our birth, that is nothing. So we ſhall be on this hypotheſis like them too after our death, that is nothing. What hardſhip is done us? None, unleſs it be an hardſhip, that we are not immortal, becauſe we wiſh to be ſo, and flatter ourſelves with that expectation. As well might that emperor of China have complained of his diſappointment, when he imagined, he had bought immortality of a certain impoſtor, who pretended to give it, and then died. If this hypotheſis were true, which I am far from aſſuming, I ſhould have no reaſon to complain, tho' having taſted exiſtence, I might abhor non-entity. Since then the firſt cannot be demonſtrated by reaſon, nor the ſecond be reconciled to my inward ſentiment, let me take refuge in reſignation at the laſt, as in every other act of my life. Let others be ſolicitous about their future ſtate, and frighten, or flatter themſelves as prejudice, imagination, bad health, or good health, nay a lowering day, or a clear ſunſhine ſhall inſpire them to do. Let the tranquillity of my mind reſt on this immoveable rock, that my future, as well as my preſent,

ſtate are ordered by an Almighty and Allwiſe Creator; and that they are equally fooliſh, and preſumptuous, who make imaginary excurſions into futurity, and who complain of the preſent.

THESE reflections, on the general and uſual ſtate of mankind, may be carried much further, and more may be added. But theſe are ſufficient; and I proceed to plead the cauſe of GOD, on another head, againſt the ſame confederates.

LII.

IF you improve in your own thoughts the hints diſperſed in the precedent reflections, you, whoſe good underſtanding is undebauched by metaphyſics, will ſee very evidently the truth of theſe two propoſitions. Firſt, that, ſuppoſing the world we inhabit to be a ſcene of as many evils as it is repreſented to be, the arguments, drawn from thence againſt the wiſdom, or power, or goodneſs of GOD, are inconcluſive. GOD is the Creator and Governor of the univerſe, not of this world alone, a ſmall and, probably, a very inconſiderable part of it: ſo that, if there was really more evil than good in this part, it would conclude nothing againſt the whole, wherein there might be ſtill much more good than evil, nor, conſequently, againſt the divine attributes. Secondly, that there is even in this world ſo much more good than evil, and the general ſtate of mankind is ſo happy in it, that the exaggerated deſcriptions of a ſuppoſed contrary ſtate would make no impreſſion againſt theſe attributes, if men had not been induced to think, moſt abſurdly, that GOD could have no good reaſon for creating them, but that of communicating happineſs to them, and happineſs ſuch as they would have, happineſs without alloy.

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The accuſation, brought againſt the goodneſs of God, is founded, therefore, on a falſe repreſentation, and an arbitrary ſuppoſition. Modern philoſophers are more to be blamed on this account, than the ancients. They have a nobler view of the immenſe univerſe. They know, that this planet is a part of it. How then can they aſſume, that this part was made for one ſpecies of the animals it produces, rather than for the whole ſyſtem? Divines are ſtill more to be blamed than mere philoſophers. A confederacy with atheiſts becomes ill the profeſſors of theiſm, and leſs than any, thoſe who pretend to teach it. No matter: they perſiſt, and having done their beſt, in concert with their allies, to deſtroy the belief of the goodneſs of God, they endeavor to deſtroy that of his juſtice, which is a further article of their alliance. I have ſaid already, that leſt the bare exiſtence of phyſical and moral evil ſhould not afford the atheiſts color enough to deny the being of God, nor the divines a ſufficient foundation to erect an heaven and an hell, they proceed to conſider theſe evils relatively to the diſtribution of them, and they pronounce this diſtribution unjuſt. Their declamations are heard on this ſubject with a double advantage, the partiality of love, and the prejudice of averſion. Men are apt to paſs eaſily, and ſilently, over the good, and complain loudly of the evil by which they are affected in their own perſons, or in the perſons of thoſe whom they approve. As eaſily, and ſilently, do they paſs over the evil, which they never think ſufficient, and complain loudly of the good, which they always think too much, that falls to the ſhare of thoſe whom they diſapprove, or who ſtand on any account in oppoſition to them. On ſuch motives they are induced to charge the providence of God with injuſtice. But here the confederacy breaks. The atheiſt concludes once more, that there is no God. The divine ſtill maintains, that there is one. How well they both ſupport

the charge, how effectually the latter re-aſſerts the juſtice of the Supreme Being, we are now to enquire: and I perſuade myſelf, that you will be under ſome ſurpriſe to find a charge ſo groundleſs, that has been ſo long and ſo clamorouſly brought, and an hypotheſis ſo weak, that has prevailed ſo long and ſo generally among theiſts. I know not, whether the natural temper and diſpoſition of mankind, by which we muſt account for one, or the political and private intereſts, by which we muſt account for the other, will take off this ſurpriſe till you have conſidered them thoroughly, in their riſe and progreſs, and found them to be permanent cauſes of permanent effects. Then, indeed, your ſurpriſe will ceaſe, becauſe you will find nothing in this caſe, which you will not find in many others; that is, error eſtabliſhed and perpetuated by affections, paſſions, intereſt, and authority among men, in oppoſition to the plaineſt dictates of their reaſon.

THAT good men are often unhappy, and bad men happy, has been a ſubject of invective, rather than of argument, to EPICURUS, to COTTA, and to others among the antients. It has been too nearly ſo in the writings of ſome of the moderns, and little leſs in thoſe of ſome eminent divines. I have quoted CLARKE on ſeveral occaſions. I muſt quote him on this. In his Evidences of natural and revealed religion *, as well as in his Demonſtration of the being and attributes of GOD †, he preſumes to ſay: "It is certain and neceſſary, even as certain "as the moral attributes of GOD," (and he had before affirmed the moral to be as eſſential to the divine nature as the natural, and, therefore, as certain as GOD's exiſtence) "that "there muſt be, at ſome time or other, ſuch a revolution, and "renovation, of things, ſuch a future ſtate of exiſtence of the

* p. 130. † p. 131.

"ſame

"ſame perſons as that, by an exact diſtribution of rewards and "puniſhments therein, all the preſent diſorders, and inequali- "ties, may be ſet right, and that the whole ſcheme of provi- "dence may appear at it's conſummation to be a deſign wor- "thy of infinite wiſdom, juſtice, and goodneſs." At it's conſummation; for it appears actually unworthy of them, as theſe men not only imply, but ſay. The hypothetical certainty and neceſſity on which the doctor is willing to riſque our acknowledgment of a Supreme Being, or our denial of him, is founded on this aſſertion; "that rewards and puniſh- "ments, in general, are neceſſary to ſupport the honor of GOD, "and of his law and government;" and on this aſſumed propoſition "that the condition of mankind, in this preſent ſtate, "is ſuch that the natural order of things is perverted, and "virtue and goodneſs prevented from obtaining their proper, "and due effects." Audacious and vain ſophiſt! His whole chain of reaſoning from the moral attributes of GOD downwards is nothing more than one continued application of moral human ideas to the deſigns and conduct of GOD: and, in this caſe, he aſſumes, moſt preſumptuouſly, that the ſcheme and order of things which GOD has eſtabliſhed in this ſyſtem of ours are ſuch as cannot be reconciled, even to the notions of human juſtice. His terms have a very ſolemn air that may impoſe on the unwary, and confirm the habitual prejudices of others. But he who analiſes them, and attends to the ſenſe of them, will perceive that more abſurdity cannot be ſtuffed into ſo few words.

To begin this analiſe; let us conſider the terms good and bad, happy and unhappy, as they ſtand here applied. Men will be never agreed about the former; the latter can never be aſcertained: and, conſequently, the propoſition that good men are unhappy, and bad men happy, ſhould not be advanced in the

ſenſe in which it is advanced, and as if the natural order of things was perverted; for what is the natural order of things? It is that which the author of nature has eſtabliſhed, and according to which evil may happen ſometimes to the good, and good to the bad: but according to which, likewiſe, virtue can never lead to unhappineſs nor vice to happineſs. It is falſe, therefore, to ſay that the natural order is actually perverted, as if unhappineſs was really become the conſequence of virtue, and happineſs of vice, in the courſe of human affairs. Bnt now, who are the good? who are the bad? If by the good are intended ſuch as conform themſelves to the law of nature, and by the bad ſuch as violate this law; the words are very equivocal, and muſt appear ſo in their applications. Men differ in nothing more than in the characters they impute to one another, even in their private thoughts: and when they agree the moſt, it is very poſſible they may not judge as God judges, tho' they pretend to judge by the ſame rule, which they call the eternal reaſon of things. Thoſe whom they admire for great atchievements, they call great; thoſe who have done them good, they call good, and often confound the two. So that the juſtice of divine providence is condemned, or acquitted, on the fallible and intereſted judgments of men.

Such indeed they are. Go back to the early ages of the world. Conſider their heroes and their demi-gods, obſerve by what goodneſs they acquired the honors of deification. They deſtroyed ſometimes robbers or wild beaſts. Others of them ſowed corn, planted the vine, and invented uſeful arts. Did theſe alone conſtitute good men according to the law of nature? By no means. Not even the laſt. Of all the cardinal virtues, fortitude ſeems chiefly to have been cultivated by the heroes of antiquity: and, notwithſtanding ſome good that they did, their rapes, their duels, their battles, the injuries

ries they offered, and the vengeance they took, made them at once objects of admiration, and plagues to mankind. When we deſcend to later ages, more enlightened by philoſophy, and more renowned for wiſdom of government, we find the characters of good and bad men rather more equivocal, and much honor done to great vices, as well as to great virtues, according to the modes and prevalent paſſions of the time, which ſanctified, by the help of prepoſſeſſion and flattery, ſuch actions as right reaſon can never approve. If we judge by this, and by this alone we ſhould judge; what ſhall we think of thoſe Roman and Greek worthies, for inſtance, whoſe names and actions have been delivered down by their hiſtorians ſo pompouſly to poſterity? * I might call in queſtion the chaſtity of Scipio, and the fidelity of Regulus to his parole. I might doubt, on the face of their hiſtory, and without any more particular anecdotes, whether Drusus was a leſs factious citizen than Saturninus. I might bring reaſons to excuſe, perhaps to juſtify, the Gracchi. I might prove, by ſome letters of Cicero to Atticus, that the ſecond Brutus was the vileſt of uſurers. But I wave ſuch particulars as we have not, for the moſt part, ſufficient means of examining, and I aſk whether the beſt of theſe men, in the beſt days of the Roman or Grecian commonwealths, were not the inſtruments of ambition, of avarice, of injuſtice, and cruelty? They were great men moſt certainly, but their goodneſs was often problematical, in Greece as well as at Rome. When revealed religions aroſe, a true one like the Chriſtian, a falſe one like the Mahometan, the ſame uncertainty remained, and the ſame fallacious judgments were made about morality. But there aroſe too a new ſort of goodneſs at the ſame time, for we need attempt to go no further back: and, about this, men can

* Vid. Au. Gellium.

never

never be agreed. The chriſtians paſs for ill men among the mahometans, the mahometans among the chriſtians; the ſects of OMAR and ALI cenſure each other; we tax your church with ſuperſtition and idolatry; ſhe taxes ours with hereſy and ſchiſm: and thus contrary judgments are paſſed on one another, not only by particular men, but by whole communities. It may be ſaid, that theſe judgments are not paſſed as generally, and as raſhly, as I pretend; and that the chriſtian, who condemns the mahometan, or the mahometan, who condemns the chriſtian religion, may diſtinguiſh very truly at the ſame time between the good and the bad men of the contrary party. But if it be ſaid, it will not hold; for the new ſort of goodneſs which has been mentioned is that, not only as much but more than moral goodneſs, by a regard or diſregard to which the juſtice of GOD, in the diſpenſations of providence, is tried in every religion that claims the prerogative of a revealed ſyſtem, and according to which it is aſſumed that men will be rewarded or puniſhed hereafter. Such has been, and ſuch is, the ſtate of this matter.

LET us conſider next the terms happy and unhappy. They are more vague, and leſs eaſy to be aſcertained in their application than the others. Agreeable ſenſations, the ſeries whereof conſtitutes happineſs, muſt ariſe from health of body, tranquillity of mind, and a competency of wealth. An abſolute privation of all theſe we are not to ſuppoſe. The caſe cannot happen; or if it could, an immediate end would be put to the miſerable being. But, how ſhall we judge for other men of the ſeveral degrees, in which they enjoy all or any of theſe? How ſhall we make up their ſeveral accounts of agreeable and diſagreeable ſenſations, and pronounce their ſtate to be, according to the balance, tolerable, or happy, or very happy? To pretend to it is, at leaſt, as abſurd as to pretend to meaſure the

degrees of goodneſs; ſince neither of them conſiſts ſo much in outward ſhew as it does in the inward ſentiment: and yet, without being able to meaſure both, what ſaucy, what pragmatical preſumption is it to pretend, in any ſort, to judge of providential diſpenſations, even ſuppoſing them to be thoſe of particular providences?

LIII.

WE will enter, if you pleaſe, firſt into ſome reflections on the general tendency of virtue and vice to promote happineſs, and after that into a more particular detail. I think then, that health of body is pretty equally diſtributed to good men and bad, whether jews, chriſtians, turks, or infidels. In this reſpect too the good are likely to have in themſelves, and in their poſterity, much the advantage. But, beſides, if health and vigor of body were to be found more commonly among the wicked than the good, it might appear to be, like other inſtances of proſperity, the cauſe, it will never appear to be the effect, of vice.

TRANQUILLITY of mind is the inſeparable companion of virtue, that adds reliſh and ſavor to all the comforts, and takes off their bitter taſte from all the misfortunes of life. It is the health of the mind. Without this, no intellectual joy can be taſted, as without the other no corporeal pleaſure. The virtuous man looks back with complacency, and feels the truth of that ſaying of TULLY: "a good conſcience is the "great theatre of virtue." The preſent ſatisfies him, and the future gives him no alarm. The ſecond BRUTUS exclaimed, that virtue was an empty name. Stoical virtue was little better; nor his, in particular, any more than a maſk that hid, under an appearance

appearance of apathy, the moſt violent and the vileſt paſſions, like the ſanctity of ſeveral antient and modern ſaints, who have impoſed on the chriſtian world. But true moral virtue is ſomething very real. It is the cauſe of our happineſs, it maintains the tranquillity of human life. If happineſs be a ſeries of agreeable ſenſations, the leſs this ſeries is expoſed to interruption, the more happy we are. But it muſt be expoſed to perpetual interruptions, if that which cauſes, and maintains it, be not in our own power. Virtue is ſo: and thus virtue may be ſaid, without any paradox, to be it's own reward *. If it has no reward from without, it rewards itſelf by inward, and therefore independent tranquillity.

Good men may have commonly a leſs ſhare in the advantages of fortune, as they are leſs likely to uſe the means of acquiring them, but then they want them leſs: and tho' it be a falſe thought, which Seneca makes the divinity employ, "that their happineſs conſiſts in wanting no happineſs †," yet is it true, that their happineſs is enhanced, as well as ſecured, by a great independence on every thing external; and the ſame Seneca ſays, ſomewhere elſe, moſt divinely well, that he placed the good things he enjoyed within his reach, and yet at ſuch a diſtance that fortune might take, but could not tear, them from him. The good man ſlakes his thirſt with a moderate draught of outward proſperity. The chalice of the wicked man is never ſufficient, be it never ſo large: and to all his paſſions, as well as to his avarice, "neſcio quid curtæ "ſemper abeſt rei." There is a fragment among Plutarch's

* Hoc dabitis, ut opinor, ſi modo ſit aliquid, eſſe beatum, id oportere totum poni in poteſtate ſapientis. Nam ſi amitti vita beata poteſt, beata eſſe non poteſt. Tull. de fin. L. 2.

† Intus omne poſui bonum. Non carere felicitate felicitas veſtra eſt. De Provid.

Miſcellanies, where fortune and vice are introduced like the contractors, who appear and make their offers, when any public work is to be let out. Fortune boaſts, that ſhe can take from men every outward good, and bring upon them every outward evil. Vice replies that this is true, but that it is not ſufficient to make them miſerable, unleſs ſhe gives her aſſiſtance; whereas ſhe is able to render them ſo without the aſſiſtance of fortune, and in ſpight of all her endeavors to make them happy.

Thus heathen philoſophers taught mankind, and there was no need of defending the providence of God againſt Zeno, nor Aristotle. The former held, that there was no real good but virtue. The latter, that health of body, and the external advantages of fortune, might be reckoned among the good things of life, but that they were ſuch in a degree very far below thoſe that reſult from virtue. Happineſs, therefore, ſell ſolely to the ſhare of good men, according to the ſtoicians; or principally to them, according to the peripatetics *: and this was indeed a noble conteſt. Chriſtians are far from having any ſuch. If they do not aſſume that health, and the advantages of fortune, conſtitute happineſs ſolely, they aſſume that it is conſtituted principally by theſe; ſince on the want which good men have ſometimes of theſe they accuſe God of injuſtice. They pretend to keep an account between God and man, to barter ſo much virtue, or ſo many acts of devotion, againſt ſo many degrees of honor, of power, of riches; and to have their piety purchaſed by the gratification of their paſ-

* Pugnant ſtoici cum peripateticis. Alteri negant quidquam eſſe bonum niſi quod honeſtum ſit. Alteri plurimum ſe, et longé longéque plurimum tribuere honeſtati; ſed tamen et in corpore, et extra, eſſe quædam bona. Certamen honeſtum, et diſputatio ſplendida. Tull. de fin. L. 2.

ſions. If God exacts the duty, he muſt pay the price. If he does not pay it in this life, he muſt pay it in another. Till that time, they give him credit: and if he does not pay it then, he is an unjuſt and cruel being. I will crayon out a picture on this occaſion in imitation of thoſe Cleanthes uſed to draw when he diſputed againſt the partizans of volupty. Let all good chriſtians, to denote their goodneſs and the juſtice of God, be fat and jolly like canons in the Lutrin. Let them be ſeated on thrones with diadems on their heads, ſceptres in their hands, and purple robes on their ſhoulders. Let the virtues, like ſo many cupids in Albano's pictures, run about the landſchape, buſy in the ſervice of their maſters. Let juſtice lead the wicked like ſlaves, with retorted arms, and down-caſt eyes, to their footſtools. Let temperance ſerve pyramids of ortolans and brimmers of tockay on their tables. Let moderation offer, and they receive, ſacks filled with gold and ſilver, and baſkets full of diamonds and rubies. In the midſt, and front, of the piece let the great Lama of the eaſt be placed on an higher throne than the reſt, if it be ſent to ſome tartarian temple: his younger brother of the weſt, if it be ſent to St. Peter's church at Rome: his grace of Canterbury, or my lord of London, if it be ſent to St. Paul's; and Luther, or Calvin, if it be ſent to any other religious aſſembly of chriſtians in theſe parts of the world.

Having ſaid thus much to ſhew the general tendency of virtue to promote the inward and real happineſs of mankind, in oppoſition to divines, and atheiſts, who make it conſiſt ſo much in outward enjoyments, that every diminution of theſe, in the circumſtances of every reputed good man, is an inſtance brought in proof of the unjuſt diſpenſations of providence; I proceed to take notice of ſome particular inſtances that have been ſo brought. They will ſerve, I think, to ſhew that God

is wiſe, and man a fool; and that, of all fools, the moſt preſumptuous, and, at the ſame time, the moſt trifling, are metaphyſical philoſophers and divines.

I neither deny nor affirm, particular providences. The ſuppoſition of ſuch has given occaſion to much lying, to much flattery, to much uncharitableneſs, to much ſuperſtition, and enthuſiaſm. When the votive pictures of thoſe who had eſcaped being drowned were ſhewn to DIAGORAS at Samothracia, he aſked where the pictures were of thoſe who had periſhed at ſea? The atheiſt believed no providence, for he believed no GOD. The prieſts would not have been overmuch concerned to convince him of a general providence, but they would have produced their legends as well as their relics to prove to him the particular providences by which their votaries had been ſaved. I enter here no further into the diſcuſſion of this point. But this I ſay, that the phyſical and moral ſyſtems have no need, like the bungling works and imperfect inſtitutions of men, to be carried on by frequent interpoſitions and partial directions, that they may continue to anſwer the intent of the maker. The ordinary courſe of things, preſerved and conducted by a general providence, confirms what the law of reaſon and of nature teaches us. The law is not only given, but executed. The authority of the lawgiver makes it our duty, the ſanctions make it our intereſt to obey the law: and theſe ſanctions have their effect ſo often, that they leave no doubt concerning them. They have their effect as often as it is neceſſary in terrorem. In imitation of providential government, human government goes no further: and yet there are a parcel of little tyrants who find fault with the former for going no further. GOD puniſhes to reform, as far as our nature, and his ſcheme, permit. They are angry that he is not as angry as they are, that every criminal is not

racked on the wheel, and that he does not punish to exterminate. Let us descend to particular instances that are urged against the justice of GOD, in order to prove it, and to confirm what has been said concerning good, and bad, happy, and unhappy, men.

LIV.

TULLY lies still open before me, and there I find many instances of this sort produced by COTTA with as much confidence as if they were decisive. Why did the two SCIPIOS fall in Spain, and MARCELLUS and PAULUS in Italy, making war against the Carthaginians? Why did MAXIMUS bury his son who was of consular dignity? Why was the Æmilian SCIPIO not safe in his own house? Why was RUTILIUS banished, DRUSUS assassinated, SCÆVOLA slain at the altar of VESTA, and CATULUS obliged to procure his own death? Why did MARIUS die in his bed, after a seventh consulship? Why were he, and CINNA, DIONYSIUS the elder, PISISTRATUS, PHALARIS, APPOLLODORUS, and even the assassin VARIUS, and the highwayman HARPALUS, suffered so long to exercise, with impunity, their cruelties? The day would be too short, indeed, to enumerate instances of any kind in this declamatory, loose, and inconclusive manner *. It is not unlike the proceeding of certain great scholars, who crowd their text and their margin with a multitude of names, which stand as vouchers of the facts or opinions they advance, and impose often on the unwary who will not, and the ignorant who cannot, examine for themselves; whilst they, who will and can

* Dies deficiat si velim numerare quibus bonis malé evenerit; nec minus, si commemorem quibus improbis optimé.

examine, discover these pretended vouchers to be sometimes of no authority, sometimes of neither and sometimes of the contrary side. I could point out signal examples of this sort in the writings of admired authors: and we might have seen some such, perhaps, on this occasion, if CICERO had made BALBUS reply to COTTA, as he makes him lay in a claim to do, with no small confidence.

I regret the want of this reply much more on account of facts, than arguments; for the stoics were great logicians, and pitiful reasoners. Their whole philosophy was little more than a perpetual play with words: and, on this occasion for instance, to have replied in character, BALBUS must have insisted that pain is not an evil, as POSIDONIUS did, when he roared out in a fit of the gout*. He might have owned it to be something rough, abhorrent to nature, difficult to be borne, melancholy and hard. He might have applied the definition of evil to the sensation of pain, but must not have called it by that name, because the portic had decreed that there is no evil but in vice, nor any good but in virtue. No matter. He would have set very probably the facts, which COTTA quoted, in a different light, and would have shewn by a fuller and more accurate state of them, that they were insufficient to his purpose. It is very probable, he would have done this, since we have good reason, even at this time, to doubt the exact truth of some of these anecdotes, and to suspect both prejudice, and partiality, in the characters.

* Concludunt ratiunculis stoici cur non sit malum; quasi de verbo, non de re, laboretur. - - - - Asperum est, contra naturam, difficile perpessu, triste, durum. Hæc copia verborum est; quod omnes uno verbo malum appellamus, id tot modis posse dicere. Definis tu mihi, non tollis dolorem. Tusc. Disp. L. 2.

I know

I know not, whether BALBUS would have called in queſtion the ſtory of REGULUS *. It was probably fabulous, in many circumſtances at leaſt, and there were thoſe among the Romans who thought it to be ſo. But it ſerved to blacken the Carthaginians, to whom they bore an immortal hatred, and popular prejudice kept it in credit at Rome: as we ſee that many falſe traditions about the Saracens and Turks have been kept up for ſeveral ages, and are ſo ſtill, notwithſtanding the detection of them, in chriſtian nations. Their poets, and their orators, ſanctified the tale for the honor of the Roman name, as the moſt illuſtrious inſtance of magnanimity, fortitude, and a religious attachment to engagements taken even with an enemy, that was ever given. BALBUS then might have rejected the ſtory; or, taking it for true, he might have inſiſted, that it furniſhed an example of human virtue, but none of divine injuſtice. He might have made REGULUS a voluntary martyr, as SENECA makes the philoſopher DIOGENES a confeſſor of natural religion.

ONE of theſe ſtoicians might have anticipated the anſwers which the other of them gave to ſuch examples, as that of RUTILIUS, who was baniſhed, or that of MAXIMUS, who loſt a ſon arrived to conſular honors. He would have ſaid of ſuch men as theſe, that they were unfortunate, but not unhappy, that they were moved, but not overcome †. He might have puſhed his argument againſt COTTA further, on the principles of the portic. He might have maintained, that the misfortunes of ſome good men are deſigned as leſſons to all by providence, in whoſe diſpenſations more regard is had to man-

* Vid. AU. GELLIUM.

† - - - Sentit illa, ſed vincit. SEN. de Provid.

kind,

kind, than to particular men †. In general, we place happineſs and unhappineſs very blindly, and very falſely. Providence endeavors to open our eyes, when things, that we eſteem evils, happen to the good. But we pervert the argument. Inſtead of concluding, that ſuch things are not real evils, we hearken to the prejudices of imagination; we believe, and, by believing, we make them ſuch, and then we accuſe this very providence of injuſtice. Even the privation of an imaginary good is eſteemed a poſitive evil, the want of riches for inſtance. The man of Ross was envied by none. CHARTRES and WALTERS, whom you have rendered immortal, were envied by many. This folly prevails ſo far, that men have imagined the Supreme Being beſt pleaſed, when his temples have glittered with gold and ſilver. If you was of this opinion, as moſt of your communion are, and thought GOD more honored on this account at St. PETER's, than at St. PAUL's, I would quote to you theſe verſes:

- - - - Jupiter Ammon
Pauper adhuc Deus eſt, nullis violata per ævum
Divitiis delubra tenens, morumque priorum
Numen Romano templum defendit ab auro *.

THE examples of thoſe good citizens of Rome, who came to untimely ends, would not have embarraſſed our ſtoician. He would have aſked his antagoniſt, what pretence could be found to accuſe providence of injuſtice, becauſe men who waged war were ſometimes killed, or becauſe men who mingled in civil conteſts were expoſed to the mutual reſentments of exaſperated parties? He would have aſked, who could determine when it was beſt for him to die? Prolonga-

† - - - - - - Pro univerſis, quorum major diis cura eſt, quam ſingulorum. Ib.

* LACT. L. 9.

tion

tion of days delivers men over, very often, to misery they would have escaped if they had died sooner, and changes the whole color of their lives: so that the good or evil that remains in store for us, at any age, being uncertain, we can neither pronounce a man unhappy because he dies, nor happy before he dies. SOLON * taught this apothegm to CROESUS, who lived to see it verified in his own case, and to reverence that wisdom, when he was the captive of CYRUS, to which he had paid little regard, while he sat on the throne of LYDIA. Rome, who made all the nations from the Euphrates to the western ocean tremble, trembled herself, when POMPEY fell sick at Naples. Pompey recovered. "Multæ urbes et publica "vota vicerunt." But he recovered only to wage the civil war with his father-in-law, to take arms without being prepared to take them, to abandon Italy, to be beaten in Greece, and to be murdered, by servile hands, in Ægypt †. Such a subject as POMPEY, of such a commonwealth as the Roman, may be paired with the greatest princes. Let me mention, therefore, the late king of France, on this occasion and to the same purpose. He had passed more than forty years in the greatest prosperity, when CHARLES the second of Spain died. Had he died at the same time, when that rich succession came into his family, his death would have been thought the more deplorable on this very account. He lived; he outlived his glory, his power, and if I may say so, almost his posterity. It might have been said of him: "- - renovata semper clade "domus, multis in luctibus, inque perpetuo mœrore, et nigrâ "veste senescit."

* - - - - - Dicique beatum
Ante obitum nemo supremaque funera debet.

† - - - - - Non enim cum Socero bellum gessisset, non imparatus arma sumpsisset, etc. Tusc. Disp. L. 2.

BALBUS

BALBUS would have ſhewn that the examples brought of proſperous iniquity were neither more juſt, nor more applicable, than thoſe of the miſery of good men. If he had allowed that MARIUS had the happineſs, ſuch an one as it is, of dying in his bed like his rival SYLLA, who took the appellation of happy very oſtentatiouſly and very unjuſtly, yet he would not have allowed this other man of blood the ſame appellation. Notwithſtanding his elevation from the plough, which he followed for hire, to the higheſt dignities of the commonwealth *, notwithſtanding his victories and triumphs, it would be difficult to find in the Roman or any other hiſtory a man whoſe crimes were more conſtantly puniſhed, or whoſe life was a ſeries of more miſery. Beſides his bodily infirmities, beſides the

Exilium, et carcer, minturnarumque paludes,
Et mendicatus victâ Carthagine panis,

he was toſſed in all the ſtorms he raiſed. His blood was every moment ready to flow, and the victorious ſword of SYLLA hung over his head. The various ſcenes of miſery, through which he made others go, were revenged by thoſe through which he went himſelf. There is a lively deſcription of both in the ſecond book of the Pharſalia †: and if we read his life, we ſhall incline to think that proſperity was meaſured out to him for the puniſhment of others, and miſery, in proportion, for his own, the executioner and the victim, alternately, of divine juſtice.

* - - - - - - - Solebat
Poſcere mercedes alieno laſſus aratro. Juv.
† - - - - - - - - Omnia paſſo,
Quæ pejor fortuna poteſt, atque omnibus uſo
Quæ melior.

Non ille favore
Numinis ingenti ſuperum protectus ab irâ,
Vir ferus, et Romam cupienti perdere fato
Sufficiens.

If he lived to a greater age than his brother and his ſon, it was in order to make him more miſerable, as he had been more criminal, than they. But even they reſembled him in miſery, as they had reſembled him in cruelty. His brother was put to a painful death at the tomb of CATULUS, and his ſon fell on his ſword in deſpair. Let me make another obſervation. MARIUS laid the foundations of his fortune on his ingratitude and treachery to METELLUS, whoſe lieutenant-general he had been in the jugurthine war. SYLLA had been quæſtor to MARIUS in the ſame war. SYLLA ruined his party, defeated his deſigns, and ſcattered his aſhes in the river †. Surely COTTA, when he accuſed the juſtice of GOD for giving proſperity to wicked men, could not have produced a more glaring proof of the contrary.

HE was not more lucky in other examples of the ſame ſort. Our ſtoician would have oppoſed to him, for inſtance, the different accounts of authors concerning the elder DIONYSIUS, ſome of whom related how this tyrant had been tormented by the furies, and had periſhed by the treachery of his own family, whilſt all of them concurred in repreſenting his whole life to have been a ſtate of miſery. What, indeed, could be more miſerable than the perpetual terror and univerſal diſtruſt, wherein he paſſed his days? PLUTARCH relates, and BALBUS might know long before PLUTARCH wrote, that this wretched man dared not truſt any barber to ſhave him; that no one,

† Erutos cineres in Anienis alveum ſparſit. VAL. MAX. L. 9. C. 2.

not

not his brother, not his ſon was ſuffered to come into his apartment, till he had been ſtripped and ſearched, and had changed his cloaths, and that the tyrant owned himſelf afraid even of the beſt of his friends: ſo that if he reigned eight and thirty years, as COTTA ſays, he was eight and thirty years miſerable. A noble inſtance truly of the proſperity of the wicked!

OUR ſtoician would have ſhewn, perhaps, that the example of PISISTRATUS was not pertinent. He uſed violence to gain, and, more than once, to regain, the ſupreme power at Athens, as GELO and HIERO did in Sicily, as others uſed it againſt him, and as it muſt always happen when parties contend for power. But when he had got this power, he uſed it well, like thoſe Sicilian princes: and tho' he was called a tyrant, in the bad ſenſe of the word, by the party oppoſed to him, yet he ſhewed the licentious Greeks how much a limited monarchy, for he limited his by the laws and advice of SOLON, was preferable to one of their turbulent and tyrannical democracies. PHALARIS was a monſter in cruelty; but the people of Agrigentum roaſted him in his own bull, after he had roaſted the maker of it: and the Orchomenians took a ſevere vengeance on APOLLODORUS. The ſame would have been obſerved to have happened to other tyrants among the Greeks, to CINNA among the Romans, and to other inferior villains, ſuch as VARIUS, who ſtabbed DRUSUS and poiſoned METELLUS, ſuch as HARPALUS, whoſe long ſucceſs in robbery bore teſtimony againſt the gods, as DIOGENES the Cynic who barked againſt them, and whom COTTA condeſcends to quote, preſumed to ſay.

BUT the Pontiff would not have been ſilenced by theſe anſwers, He had a reply ready. "Prohiberi melius fuit im-

" pedirique." It had been better in the gods to hinder theſe men from doing ſo much miſchief, than to leave them to vengeance afterwards. Now I think that BALBUS would have treated this reply as a mere evaſion, grounded on a falſe ſuppoſition, and, even with that help, inſufficient. The men ſpoken of, would he have ſaid, are far from enjoying inward happineſs, whatever outward proſperity may attend the courſe of their wicked lives. They live in danger, in fear, and in perpetual anguiſh of mind. Their puniſhment, therefore, is not deferred: and if they are ſuffered long to puniſh others, they are miniſters and proofs at the ſame time of that divine juſtice which I defend. Their proſperity ſerves to this very purpoſe. A DIONYSIUS, or a CINNA, or any other inhuman tyrant, is to be looked upon like one of thoſe monſters which the poets feigned. Like a minotaure fed with human fleſh, or ſuch a boar as executed DIANA's vengeance in Ætolia. Bolts of deſtroying thunder go out of their mouths*. Their very breath ſcatters deſolation around. When the monſter has inflicted the puniſhment he was ſent to inflict, when the meaſure of his iniquity, and of GOD's juſtice, is filled, a THESEUS or a MELEAGER is raiſed up, and he periſhes.

THIS is the general courſe of things which infinite wiſdom has conſtituted, and the examples of the few who ſuffer neceſſarily, tho' occaſionally according to it, are ſufficient to give a warning to all men that they are inexcuſable if they do not take. COTTA, who exerciſes greater injuſtice towards GOD than any of the tyrants he quotes did towards men, is much ſcandalized that thoſe two eyes of the mediterranean

* - - - Ultorem ſpreta per agros miſit aprum.
Fulmen ab ore venit, frondes afflatibus ardent. OVID. Metam. L. 8.

coaſt, Corinth and Carthage, were put out. CRITOLAUS violated the reſpect that was due to the Roman legates. ASDRUBAL uſed much cruelty to the Roman captives. Theſe were the immediate cauſes of the ruin of thoſe two republics, and MEMMIUS and SCIPIO were the inſtruments of pride, of ambition, and of inſatiable reſentment. GOD could have prevented theſe deſtructions no doubt "ſubvenire certé potuit et "conſervare urbes tantas atque tales." But how did the Pontiff know that MEMMIUS and SCIPIO were not inſtruments of the juſtice of providence, as well as of Roman policy and paſſion? The worſt men, and the Romans were none of the beſt, are employed to puniſh the worſt. None ſo fit for the taſk. They are the inſtruments and in their turns the examples of divine juſtice. The wealth, the ſplendor, the magnificence of Corinth were great; but Corinth was a ſink of iniquity. Carthage was a great and powerful ſtate; but the Carthaginians were a faithleſs, factious, and cruel people. Might not theſe be the remote and true cauſes, whatever the immediate and apparent were, of their deſtruction? Was GOD obliged to ſave them by an extraordinary interpoſition againſt the ordinary courſe of his providence, becauſe their neighbours admired or feared them? The Romans had no advantage in real virtue over the Carthaginians, tho' they had it greatly in policy, order, diſcipline, and a certain enthuſiaſtic zeal for the grandeur of their empire, and the glory of the Roman name. If we had PHILISTUS or any of the Carthaginian hiſtorians in our hands, we ſhould ſee very evidently what we may collect from thoſe of Rome, that romana fides was or deſerved to be a proverbial term of reproach in Afric as much as punica fides in Italy. Let us take then occaſion to adore the wiſdom and juſtice of divine providence from an example brought in oppoſition to the latter. The romans deſtroyed Carthage, and, by her deſtruction, prepared the way to their own. At the

the very time when COTTA lamented that of Corinth and Carthage, that of Rome was coming on; for the loſs of her liberty was connected with that of her empire by a ſcarce interrupted ſucceſſion of tyrants. Under theſe ſhe lay, as it were on the rack, and died a lingering and painful death.

LV.

IN aſſerting the juſtice of providence, I chuſe rather to inſiſt on the conſtant, viſible, and undeniable courſe of a general providence which is ſufficient for the purpoſe, than to aſſume a diſpenſation of particular providences. The atheiſt, who aſſumes that there ought to be ſuch, complains that they are wanting. The theiſt, who admits that there are ſuch, complains that they are inſufficient. The former draws from what he aſſumes a pretence to cavil. The latter only grows inconſiſtent; for I would aſk him, if there are any ſuch providences, why not more? He admits enough to break through and overturn the natural order and conſtitution of the phyſical and moral ſyſtem. How comes it to paſs that there are not enough to ſtop his mouth when he complains of the miſery of man and the injuſtice of providence? The truth is, that we have not in philoſophical ſpeculation, in any hiſtory except that of the Bible, nor in our own experience, ſufficient grounds to eſtabliſh the doctrine of particular providences, and to reconcile it to that of a general providence, which continues, and directs the courſe of things in the material and intellectual ſyſtems, as theſe ſyſtems were originally conſtituted by the author of nature. They who have attempted to do this by ſhewing with great, and, as I think, with too much ſubtilty of wit and licence of imagination, in what caſes, how far, and in what manner, God may act by particu-

lar and occaſional interpoſitions, conſiſtently with the preſervation of that general order of cauſes and effects which he has conſtituted, ſeem to me quite unintelligible. It is impoſſible to conceive that the courſe of the ſun, or the double revolution of the earth, ſhould be ſuſpended or altered by a temporary, nay, a momentary interpoſition of ſome particular providence, or that any thing worthy of ſuch an interpoſition ſhould happen in the material world, without violating the mechanical conſtitution of it, and the natural order of cauſes and effects in it. As little is it poſſible to conceive ſuch occaſional interpoſitions in the intellectual ſyſtem as ſhall give new thoughts and new diſpoſitions to the minds of men, and in conſequence new determinations to their wills, without altering in every ſuch inſtance the ordinary and natural progreſſion of human underſtanding, nor without reſuming that freedom of will, which every man is conſcious that he has, tho' ſome are abſurd enough to deny it, and to oppoſe metaphyſical dreams to intuitive knowledge. I confeſs, that I comprehend as little the metaphyſical, as the phyſical, impulſe of ſpirits †, and that the words ſuggeſtion, ſilent communication, ſudden influence, influx, or injection of ideas, give me no determinate, clear and diſtinct ideas, nor even, as I ſuſpect, to the perſons who talk of them the moſt, and build ſo much upon them.

To acknowledge the fatum of antient philoſophers, to hold with the mahometans an abſolute predeſtination of all events, with SPINOZA and CALVIN the neceſſity of all our actions, or with LEIBNITZ his whimſy of a pre-eſtabliſhed harmony, would be ſomewhat almoſt as mad, as to take the true hiſtory of LUCIAN for ſuch. On the other hand it would be abſurd,

† Relig. of Nat. delineated, et alibi.

and

and impious both to aſſert with EPICURUS, that the world was made by a fortuitous concourſe of atoms, and that, as it was made ſo, it is governed by chance, without any knowledge, without any rule, without any providence. The truth lies between theſe extremes. The world is governed by laws, which the Creator impoſed on the phyſical and moral ſyſtems, when he willed them into exiſtence, which make a part of them, which muſt be in force as long as they laſt, and any change in which would be a change of the ſyſtems themſelves. Theſe laws are invariable, but they are general: and from this generality what we call contingency ariſes. The laws of matter and motion, thoſe which we know and thoſe which have not been yet diſcovered, are fixed, no doubt. But within the latitude which they allow, tho' nothing happens which is repugnant to them, many things happen which ſeem ſo to us. Plaſtic, or faſhioning nature, produces ſometimes monſters, and all material beings as they partake of the good, partake of the evil, which matter and motion cauſe; for it would be trifling to object the aſſumed exiſtence of beings, material indeed like the ſaints in heaven, if thoſe glorified bodies are material, according to our idea of matter, but exiſting in ſyſtems that are not liable to the ſame inconveniencies or evils that ariſe from matter and motion, ſuch as pain, ſickneſs, or death, for inſtance, which our ſyſtem is. There is no need of any great ſagacity to perceive that the caſe is much the ſame in the moral world; nay that it is more liable to contingency than the natural. The moral world is ſubject to the law of right reaſon, fixed, invariable, promulgated in the very nature of things, and enforced by the ſanctions of rewards and puniſhments, which follow often the obſervation or the breach of it. But then, inſtead of two principles, whereof one is active, and the other paſſive only, as in the other caſe, there are in this two active principles, tho' one be ſlower than the other, reaſon and paſſion.

paſſion. Both neceſſary in the human ſtate. Both uſeful when reaſon, both hurtful when paſſion governs. Between both ſtands the freedom of our will which can determine either way, and from this conſtitution ariſes all that mixture of moral good and evil that we ſee and feel.

As little as the atheiſt and the divine approve the natural and moral conſtitution of the world, they are unable to ſhew how it might be altered in any particular inſtance, except for the worſe upon the whole; and, therefore, they muſt be reduced at laſt to aſſert, that goodneſs and juſtice require the whole ſhould be altered, as they required originally that there ſhould have been no ſuch ſyſtem made. In the firſt light they deſerve to be treated like froward children, who complain, and wiſh, and know neither what they want, nor what they deſire. In the ſecond, they deſerve to be treated like patients, proper for doctor Monroe, and to be put under his care. Nothing leſs than metaphyſics could have turned ſo many good heads. Common ſenſe and common obſervation would have hindered them from aſſuming, on the faith of this fantaſtical ſcience, that God made the world for the ſake of man; and man for this reaſon alone, that he might communicate happineſs to his creature: which two ſuppoſitions are affirmed or implied in all their arguments, and thus a large field of complaint is opened to them. Without theſe they would have had no pretence to criticiſe the works of God, nor the diſpenſations of his providence, to upbraid his goodneſs, nor to cenſure his juſtice. On the contrary they would have found reaſon to admire, thankfully and ſubmiſſively, that ſupreme wiſdom, which has provided ſo amply, by a few general laws, for the well-being of all his creatures. But it is with this very inſtance of ſupreme wiſdom, that they find fault. General laws, under the direction of a general providence, do not

provide ſufficiently for human happineſs, according to them; and their notions of human importance are wound up ſo high, that they think there ought to be as many providences as men, on which notion guardian-angels, and genii, and dæmons were introduced, and are hardly yet exploded; or elſe that the immediate providence of GOD ſhould be attentive to all the wants and prayers of men, tho' the wants are often imaginary, and the prayers impertinent, and ſhould be ready on every occaſion to protect and reward the good, to puniſh and reclaim the wicked.

EVERY religion boaſts of many inſtances, wherein the divine providence has been thus exerciſed. We need go no further than our own eccleſiaſtical hiſtorians, and other chriſtian writers to find them. The moſt common events are repreſented by exaggeration and declamation to have been extraordinary interpoſitions of the hand of GOD. Nay, at this time, there is many an old woman who thinks herſelf as important as your and GAY's pariſh clerk, and is ready to relate with much ſpiritual pride the particular providences that have attended her and her's. Thus then the matter ſtands. The ſame perſons, who have contributed to eſtabliſh this belief, have propagated, and continue to propagate an opinion, that the Supreme Being deals unjuſtly with mankind in this life, becauſe the interpoſitions of his providence are not as frequent as they judge that they ought to be. I ſay as frequent; for where they aſſume that he does interpoſe, they dare not ſay he interpoſes unjuſtly. CLARKE complains*, that there are not in many ages plain evidences enough of the interpoſition of divine providence to convince men of the wiſdom any more than of the juſtice and goodneſs of GOD. They reaſon like

* Evid. p. 142.

COTTA,

Cotta †, they are diſpleaſed at the few particular inſtances of this care; few as they conceive with reſpect to all the proper objects of it: and ſince he takes it in ſo few inſtances, his juſtice is no more acquitted at their tribunal than if he took it in none. This belief and this opinion do not hang very well together in reaſon, but they may do ſo in religious policy. To keep up a belief of particular providences ſerves to keep up a belief not only of the efficacy of prayer, and of the interceſſion of ſaints in heaven, as well as of the church on earth, but of the ſeveral rites of external devotion; and to keep up a belief that they are few, and that the providence of God, as it is exerciſed in this world, is therefore on the whole unjuſt, ſerves to keep up a belief of another world, wherein all that is amiſs here, ſhall be ſet right. The miniſtry of a clergy is thought neceſſary on both theſe accounts by all: and there are few, who ſee how difficult it is to make the two doctrines; which theſe reverend perſons maintain, appear in any tolerable manner conſiſtent. On the whole, tho' there is little credit to be given to all that lying legends, ſuſpicious traditions, and idle rumors have reported, concerning particular acts of providence, wrought on particular occaſions, and directed manifeſtly by an immediate exerciſe of the divine power to the advantage of ſome, and to the detriment of others, yet will I not preſume to deny, that there have been any ſuch. This I will ſay only, that if any ſuch have been, they muſt have been ſuch as might happen ſometimes in the ordinary courſe of a general providence. They could not be ſuch as muſt have violated the laws of nature in their production. Nothing can be leſs reconcileable to the notion of an all-perfect Being than the imagination that he undoes by his power in parti-

† - - - - Non placet autem paucis a diis immortalibus eſſe conſultum; ſequitur ergo ut nemini conſultum ſit.

cular caſes what his wiſdom, to whom nothing is future, once thought ſufficient to be eſtabliſhed for all caſes. The effects, therefore, that are aſſumed of particular providences are either falſe, or they are undiſtinguiſhable from thoſe of a general providence, and becom eparticular by nothing more than the application which vain ſuperſtition or pious fraud makes of them. It is as eaſy to attack, and it is as eaſy to defend the juſtice of GOD on one hypotheſis as on the other. But ſince one is ſupported by equivocal and doubtful, and the other by unqueſtionable facts, I ſhall borrow no help from the former, I ſhall ſuppoſe them not to have been, and ſhall reſt the cauſe of GOD on the latter, which are likewiſe the moſt proper to be urged againſt the atheiſts.

LVI.

LET us conſider how it appears by the objections theſe difficult perſons make that we, and the ſyſtem we inhabit, ſhould have been framed to ſatisfy them, and to anticipate their cavils; after which it will be proper to conſider, further, how it is framed, and to compare GOD's plan with theirs. Phyſical nature then ſhould have been ſo conſtituted that the whole world might have been one paradiſe, neither ſcorched by the ſun, nor pinched by the cold, nor ruffled by tempeſts. Men ſhould have enjoyed in it every natural good, have been ſubject to no natural evil, no not to death which they deem to be the greateſt of evils. Moral nature ſhould have been ſo conſtituted that every man might be neceſſarily determined to all the obligations of morality, that he might be good, as PATERCULUS ſays of CATO *, becauſe he could not

* Quia aliter eſſe non potuit.

be

be otherwiſe. He ſhould have been impeccable as well as invulnerable. No matter how all this would have unconnected the univerſe, and have broke the harmony, and the conſent of it's parts, in which we ſee that the planets of our ſolar ſyſtem act on one another, that the ſun acts on all of them, and that for ought we can tell the ſeveral ſolar ſyſtems that compoſe the univerſe act on one another likewiſe. No matter how all this would have accorded with a gradation of ſenſe and intellect; how ſenſes leſs imperfect would have broke that proportion between them and their object which is neceſſary to make them uſeful in human life; how ſuperior faculties of the mind would have broke that ſcale of intelligence which riſes up to man in this animal ſyſtem; which may riſe up from him in other ſyſtems in an higher proportion, and which one of theſe allies, the divine, allows to do ſo in other created Beings. No matter for ſuch conſiderations as theſe. Inſtead of concluding from the want of all theſe advantages, which they eſteem to be due to them, that man is not ſo noble a creature as they have repreſented him to themſelves, they conclude that becauſe he wants them GOD is unjuſt. Juſt ſo they concluded from their indeterminable notions of divine goodneſs, and of divine love, that the world was made for man, and man not to be moderately but immoderately happy in it; inſtead of concluding the very contrary from their determinate idea of wiſdom which has not proportioned any means to theſe ends, in making the world and man.

BUT the dogmatical perſons who aſſume ſo much, and prove commonly ſo little, do not only proceed on groundleſs principles. They ſhift and vary their principles of reaſoning as different occaſions require, which is a practice much uſed, avowed, and approved by antient fathers, and which makes it rather tedious than hard very often to refute their

ſucceſſors. In the preſent argument for inſtance, many of their complaints and objections are levelled at the whole ſcheme and order of things both phyſical and moral. They mean nothing, or they mean that the whole ſhould have been differently conſtituted, and in the manner I have hinted, to have been reconcileable to the goodneſs and juſtice of God. But they grow leſs ſevere in their criticiſms, and leſs exorbitant in their demands at other times, and ſeem to think that the divine attributes might have been ſaved even in the preſent conſtitution of phyſical and moral nature, if by continual interpoſitions of providence every good man had been protected from evils of both kinds, whilſt every ill man was expoſed to them all; if the office of the angels ſtanding before the throne of God * and miniſtring to the favorites of God, that is, to the elect, had been more extended and more regularly performed. This may be looked upon as a ſort of compoſition into which they are driven by the extravagance of the other hypotheſis, and by the abſurd conſequences that flow from it.

If the divine attributes had required that there ſhould have been no ſuch thing as phyſical or moral evil, man would have been viſibly the final cauſe of a world made ſolely for his uſe, and to be the ſcene of his happineſs. This world would have been viſibly the final cauſe of the univerſe. All the planets would have rolled in ſubſerviency to ours, and the fixed ſtars themſelves would have ſerved to no other purpoſe than to twinkle by night, to adorn our canopy, and to pleaſe our eyes. But this hypotheſis appearing too extravagant to be inſiſted upon in it's whole extent, one part of it has been laid aſide, and one retained. No one will affirm in terms,

* Vid. Dan. C. vii.

I think,

I think, at this time, that our world is the final cauſe of the univerſe. But many will affirm that man is by the goodneſs of God the final cauſe of the world he inhabits; and, therefore, if phyſical evil is inſeparable from phyſical nature, and moral evil from moral nature, by the neceſſary relations of things, or by the general ſcheme which infinite wiſdom has eſtabliſhed, the conſiſtency of the divine attributes required that ſomething more than we obſerve ſhould have been done, to make the firſt deſign of God in the creation of this world and of man effectual. His goodneſs required at leaſt, that the general ſtate of mankind ſhould not be as miſerable as it is in a world made for the ſake of mankind. His juſtice required moſt certainly, that they who ſeek the perfection of their nature, and the happineſs of their kind in virtue, ſhould be diſtinguiſhed from thoſe who deprave their own nature, pervert the order of things, and hinder virtue from having it's due effect. What could not be effected by a general providence, acting by general laws, might have been effected by particular providences acting on every occaſion, according to the merit or demerit of every rational creature. But this has not been done, and ſuch providences are ſo rare, that there is far leſs virtue than vice to be found, and that the former is, for the moſt part, unhappy, and the latter proſperous in this world. The juſtice of God is, therefore, juſtly condemned, unleſs there is another. Let us make a few reflections, that will ſhew how ill this charge is laid, and how ill, if it was better laid, the expedient of another life would ſerve to ſet right the pretended irregularities of this world, and to juſtify the providence of God.

LVII.

TO ſuppoſe a conſtant ſeries of particular interpoſitions from above, neceſſary to this purpoſe, ſeems to my apprehenſion little leſs abſurd than to ſuppoſe the neceſſity of a perpetual and univerſal theocracy, and to complain that ſuch a government of the world has not been eſtabliſhed, is as ſilly as it would be to complain that the golden age of the poets is ended, or that the millenary year of the Apocalypſe is not begun. If all men had been determined neceſſarily to virtue, there would have been certainly no moral evil, nor probably any more phyſical than there was in paradiſe, or than there will be in the new Jeruſalem. But there would have been no merit neither, nor properly ſpeaking any ſuch thing as virtue. Our moral obligations ariſe from that nature, which GOD willed we ſhould have. They muſt continue as long as this nature exiſts, that is, as long as there are men: and ſo long whatever promotes the happineſs of the kind will be virtue at leaſt in one ſenſe, and whatever tends to the deſtruction of it will be vice in every ſenſe. Vice and virtue muſt take their denominations not only from their effects, but from their motives. Actions of the firſt ſort muſt have always a bad motive as well as a bad effect, and muſt, therefore, be always attended with demerit. But actions of the ſecond, or mere innocence, may have no moral motive at all, nor conſequently any true merit, as in the caſe of an abſolute and natural determination; or they may have motives, which render them rather appearances of virtue than really virtuous, and deprive them in a ſtrict ſenſe of all merit, as in the caſe of particular and occaſional determinations of the will wrought by immediate interpoſitions of the divine power, whether acting ſilently within, or ſenſibly without. Our inconſiſtent academician confeſſes

confeſſes thus much in the very breath, in which he affirms that mankind ſhould have been determined, ſome way or other, by the gods to virtue. Nay, he aſſerts even more than is true; for tho' we owe the practice of virtue to ourſelves, to our own elections, and to our own free-will, in which all the merit we can have conſiſts, yet we owe to GOD the means of knowing, and of practiſing it *.

IF all men had been originally and neceſſarily determined, by the conſtitution of their nature, to virtue, according to COTTA's firſt propoſition, and had, therefore, been able to acquire no more merit in doing virtuous actions, than they acquire in drinking, when they are thirſty, or in gratifying any natural appetite, what a curious ſyſtem might ſome philoſopher of the ſchool of POTAMO have made by joining the gods of EPICURUS to the men of COTTA? Slim, taper, tranſparent beings in heaven, indolent and unactive †: a ſucceſſion of machines on earth, wound up to go a certain time, to continue certain motions, and to ſtrike at certain moments, according to their predeſtination, or the pre-eſtabliſhed harmony of their ſyſtem. But, in good earneſt, is a ſyſtem of particular providences in which the Supreme Being, or the angels, like his miniſters to reward, and his executioners to puniſh, are conſtantly employed in the affairs of mankind, much more reaſonable? Would the juſtice of GOD be more manifeſt in ſuch a ſtate of things, than in the preſent? I ſee no room for merit on the part of man, nor for juſtice on the part of GOD, in ſuch

* Virtutem nemo unquam acceptam deo retulit. Nimirum rectè. Propter virtutem enim jure laudamur, et in virtute rectè gloriamur. Quod non contingeret, ſi id donum a deo, non à nobis haberemus.

. . . . Debebant illi quidem omnes bonos efficere ſiquidem hominum generi conſulebant. Sin id minus, bonis quidem certè conſulere debebant.

† Exiles . . . . perlucidos . . . . monogrammos Deos, et nihil agentes.

a ſtate: and a ſtate of partial, not univerſal, determinations to goodneſs, inſtead of being liable to ſuch cavils as we have now under conſideration, would be liable to unanſwerable objections. It would be productive of effects, quite oppoſite to thoſe that are aſſumed, and would cauſe the wildeſt confuſion in the judgments of mankind.

If ſome men were determined to goodneſs by the ſilent workings of the ſpirit, and others not, which they muſt be on the ſuppoſition of particular providences, and a partial not univerſal determination; if the former were protected from evils of every kind, on account of this goodneſs, and if the latter were expoſed, for want of it, to all thoſe phyſical evils which reſult from the conſtitution of the material world, as well as to all thoſe moral evils which men would bring on one another, what could be ſaid to excuſe the juſtice of God? Plainly nothing. The proceeding would be that of injuſtice, and an arbitrary partiality which can never be imputed, even indirectly, to him without blaſphemy. It is not poſſible for me to conceive, that any thing out of himſelf could be a motive to the firſt intelligent cauſe of all things to create any thing, neither can I ſubſcribe to the opinion, that certain general independent natures tempted God, as it were, to cloath them with exiſtence. I can conceive ſtill leſs, that individual creatures, before they have done either good or evil, nay, before their actual exiſtence, can be objects of predilection or averſion, of love or hatred to God: and yet this muſt have been, to have made ſuch a ſyſtem of particular providences effectual in the firſt inſtance of it. If we can conceive it made ſo in this, we may conceive it made ſo in all the reſt: and if God had pre-determined ſome men to goodneſs, excluſively of others, without any motive on his ſide, we may eaſily conceive that particular providences would have been employed

to ſecure happineſs to them, without any merit on theirs. But "credat Judæus Apella non ego." CLARKE ſhall not force me into atheiſm, tho' I deny what he aſſerts, concerning the moral attributes of GOD, nor WOLLASTON, tho' I ſee, not only one, but many good men unhappy, and am not convinced by his reaſonings of a future ſtate.

I may be ſtopped here, perhaps, and may be aſked, with a tone of authority, Nay, but, O man, who art thou, that replieſt againſt God? If I am ſo ſtopped, and ſo queſtioned, my anſwer is both ready and ſufficient. "Holy, or reverend ſir, "I am a better theiſt than you, and on this occaſion I reaſon "better. It is not I that reply againſt GOD. It is you. Had "ſuch a ſyſtem, as this, been actually eſtabliſhed by GOD, he "would have ſpoke by his works, and I ſhould, for this very "reaſon, have believed it agreeable to the divine attributes, "tho' I could not have reconciled it to my notions of im-"partiality, and juſtice, nor even of wiſdom. But ſince I "cannot reconcile it to them, and ſince I have no aſſurance "but your word, againſt all appearances, that GOD elects ſome "men, and rejects or neglects others; that he ſofteneth the "hearts of ſome, and hardeneth the hearts of others; I ſhould "reply againſt GOD indeed, if I admitted what you aſſert to "be true. I reaſon cautiouſly, from what he has done, to his "attributes. You affirm boldly, without any regard to what "he has done, or to the perfections of an all-perfect Being."

As to the other part of the hypotheſis, which ſuppoſes particular providences, that might protect the good and ſecure their happineſs, wanting, and, therefore, GOD convicted of injuſtice in the preſent conſtitution of things, it is maintained, I think, by the whole chorus of divines; and they who do not hold the doctrine I have mentioned, are as loud in their com-

plaints as they who do. They who agree in little elſe, agree in cenſuring the diſpenſations of providence, and if ſome are diſſatisfied with the lot of their elect, others are ſo as much with that of good men, in general, however they came to be good. To ſatisfy them all, therefore, and to ſhew himſelf a juſt governor of the world, inſtead of governing by the eſtabliſhed laws of nature and by a general providence, he ſhould have corrected theſe laws and have governed by particular providences, whenever the ſervice of good men required it. If he had not made all men good, he ſhould have made all good men happy. Now ſuppoſe it done, ſuppoſe this human reformation of divine œconomy, what would be the conſequences? Would they not be ſuch as theſe?

If the good, beſides the enjoyment of all that happineſs which is inſeparable from virtue, were exempted from all kinds of evil, and if the wicked, beſides thoſe evils which are inſeparable from vice, and thoſe which happen to all men in the ordinary courſe of events, were expoſed to others that the hand of God inflicted on them in an extraordinary manner; in ſhort, if an ark was ready, at every inundation, to ſave the former, and if a deſtroying angel was ready on every occaſion to wreak vengeance on the latter, it is certain, as we have obſerved already, that ſuch good men would have very little merit, and it may be ſuſpected, that the hearts of the wicked would be hardened, as that of Pharaoh was by all the plagues that God brought on him and his people. Such good men would have, whilſt they continued to be good, no other merit than that of children who are cajoled into their duty; or than that of galley-ſlaves who ply at the oar, becauſe they hear and ſee and fear the laſh of the boatſwain.

But

But would there not be, at the ſame time, ſome further defects in this ſcheme? I think there would. It ſeems to me that theſe good men, being thus diſtinguiſhed, by particular providences in their favor, from the reſt of mankind, might be apt either not to contract, or to loſe, that general benevolence which is a fundamental principle of the law of nature, and that public ſpirit, which is the life and ſoul of ſociety. God has made the practice of morality our intereſt, as well as our duty. But men, who found themſelves conſtantly protected from the evils that fell on others, might grow inſenſibly to think themſelves unconcerned in the common fate: and if they relaxed in their zeal for the public good, they would relax in their virtue; for public good is the object of virtue. They might do worſe. Spiritual pride might infect them. They might become, in their own imaginations, the little flock, or the choſen ſheep. Others have become ſo by the mere force of enthuſiaſm, without any ſuch inducements as thoſe which we aſſume in this caſe, and experience has ſhewn that there are no wolves like theſe ſheep. Thus forced into virtue, and rewarded for being virtuous, they might ceaſe to deſerve the reward in any ſenſe, or degree. On the whole; the ſcheme, oppoſed to God's ſcheme, is inconſiſtent with all our notions of wiſdom, as well as of juſtice. It is the ſcheme of men: it muſt be tried, therefore, by human ideas and notions; and ſince the juſtice of providence is attacked on theſe, it may be defended, ſurely, on the ſame. To meaſure the wiſdom and juſtice of God by a rule ſo inadequate as that of human intelligence, is vanity and preſumption in the higheſt degree. But to expoſe this vanity and preſumption, by ſhewing the men who are guilty of them, that even their own rule is ſufficient to condemn them, is very conſiſtent with the modeſty of true theiſm.

I will conclude this head by obſerving, that we have example, as well as reaſon, for us, when we reject the hypotheſis of particular providences. If the government of a general providence was liable to the objections that are made to it, a government by particular providences would be liable to none. But the contrary appears true from the example of the Jewiſh theocracy. God was the king of that people. He did not decline the title, nor the exerciſe of kingly power, as his ſon, who came to ſuffer for all mankind and not to govern a moſt inconſiderable portion of them, did afterwards. His preſence reſided among this people, and his juſtice was manifeſted daily in rewarding and puniſhing by unequivocal, ſignal, miraculous interpoſitions of his power. The effect of all was this, the people rebelled at one time, and repented at another. Particular providences, directed by God himſelf immediately, and on the ſpot, if I may ſay ſo, had particular temporary effects only, none general nor laſting: and the people were ſo little ſatisfied with this ſyſtem of government, that they depoſed the Supreme Being, and inſiſted to have another king, and to be governed like their neighbours. How long this theocracy may be ſaid to have continued, I am quite unconcerned to know, and ſhould be ſorry to miſpend any time in enquiring. It is enough for my purpoſe, to have obſerved that the juſtice of God was not ſo acknowledged as to produce any ſuitable effects, at a point of time when the Iſraelites had no other king but God; and to conclude from thence, that if he governed the whole world at preſent by particular providences, they would not have a better effect in manifeſting his juſtice, nor ſtop the clamor againſt it, of the very men, perhaps, who accuſe now the injuſtice of his general providence. Nay the caſe would be much worſe, and every particular exertion of his power would render his juſtice

juſtice more diſputable. So pregnant is this ſcheme with abſurdities.

It has been ſaid already, that where religions, which claim to have been revealed, prevail, a new character of goodneſs ariſes, beſides that which conſiſts in obedience to the laws of nature, and compliance with our moral obligations. Faith in certain men, and, on their authority, in certain facts, and certain ſpeculative propoſitions, how incredible ſoever the former, how little intelligible ſoever the latter may be, together with the practice of certain duties which the arbitrary will of man impoſes, and the obſervation of certain forms of outward devotion -- conſtitute this artificial goodneſs, which ſtands often in the place of natural, and is always attended to much more.

This is that kind of goodneſs which chriſtian divines intend principally or ſolely, when they complain that good men are often unhappy, and bad men happy, by the preſent conſtitution of things. They eſtabliſh a rule, and are not agreed about the application of it; for who are to be reputed good chriſtians. Go to Rome, they are papiſts. Go to Geneva, they are calviniſts. Go to the north of Germany, they are lutherans. Come to London, they are none of theſe. Orthodoxy is a mode. It is one thing at one time and in one place. It is ſomething elſe at another time and in another place, or even in the ſame place; for in this religious country of ours, without ſeeking proofs in any other, men have been burned under one reign, for the very ſame doctrines they were obliged to profeſs in another. You damn all thoſe who differ from you. We doubt much about your ſalvation. In what manner, now, can the juſtice of God be manifeſted by particular providences? Muſt the order of them change as the notions of ortho-

orthodoxy change, and must they be governed by events, instead of governing them? If they are favorable to those of your communion, they will be deemed unjust by every good protestant, and God will be taxed with encouraging idolatry and superstition. If they are favorable to those of any of our communions, they will be deemed unjust by every good papist, and God will be taxed with nursing up heresy and schism. God can do nothing more than to furnish arms against himself, by the dispensations of particular providences in the christian world, and every one of these will pass, in the minds of some men, for a proof of injustice, if it passes in the minds of others for a proof of justice. Nay, more. If, in these dispensations, God, who knows the hearts of men, should judge differently from our divines, if he should shew more regard to moral goodness, than to the reputed orthodoxy of any side, it would fare with him--I say it with reverence--as it fares with every honest man in civil contests; He would be calumniated by all sides, in the exercise of particular providences, as he is in that of a general providence.

LVIII.

HAVING said thus much to shew the absurdity of assuming that a system of particular providences is necessary to render the government of God, in the present constitution of the physical and moral world, a just government, as it must, indeed, be necessary, if the government of a general providence, according to the established order of things, is unjust; it seems to me, that they who object to this are driven to the greatest of all absurdities. They must either give up their objections, or they must insist that the whole established order of things ought to be changed, and that God cannot govern mankind

mankind with juſtice, unleſs he undoes all he has done, and aſſerts this moral attribute at the expence of his wiſdom. To ſay, as CLARKE ſays, " that the natural order of things is ſo " perverted that virtue and goodneſs cannot obtain their pro- " per and due effects," is a mere fallacy. He begs the que- " ſtion, and begging the queſtion he affirms untruly. How, and when, was the natural order of things perverted? What is every natural order, but that which the Author of nature appoints, and how can it be changed for the better, or for the worſe, without a new appointment of his? Are we to believe then, that he has undone his work once already after the fall of Adam, and that he muſt undo it again, to appear either good or juſt? To think worthily of GOD, we muſt think that the natural order of things has been always the ſame, and that a Being of infinite wiſdom and knowledge, to whom the paſt and the future are like the preſent, and who wants no experience to inform him, can have no reaſon to alter what infinite wiſdom and knowledge have once done, as I have hinted above. Again. What are the proper and due effects of virtue and goodneſs? Nay, what are virtue and goodneſs themſelves? They are not, I believe, independent, nor eternal, but they are real natures, reſulting from the ſyſtem of rational beings to which they are agreeable, as their contraries are repugnant, and they muſt, therefore, be as invariable as the ſyſtem of which they are parts. Thus I think; for the opinion of the independency of any natures on GOD, or of their co-eternity with him, are bugbears to me who am a child in philoſophy, tho' they are none to ſuch full-grown metaphyſical giants as CUDWORTH, CLARKE, and others. Now, if virtue and goodneſs be as invariable as this ſyſtem, their effects in it muſt be as invariable as themſelves, and, therefore, to ſay that they cannot obtain their proper and due effects in it is nothing better than cant. They may not obtain all the effects which

theſe great doctors in metaphyſics and artificial theology eſteem proper and due to them; but they may, and they certainly do, obtain all thoſe which he, who willed this ſyſtem and them into being, deſigned that they ſhould obtain; for if he had deſigned that they ſhould have obtained more, he would have proportioned different means to a different end, and man would have been a leſs imperfect creature than he is.

Could philoſophers and divines be perſuaded to lay aſide the affectation of etching out a little real knowledge, with much hypotheſis in matters, where hypotheſis ſhould be leaſt employed, many things, which are made intricate by this method, would be extremely plain. Thus, for inſtance, in the preſent caſe, let them not aſſume, that there are natures which exiſt independently on God, according to which he proceeds, or ſhould proceed, and that we may judge, by a rule common to him and us, the eternal reaſon of things. Let them not aſſume, that the moral attributes are preciſely the ſame in God, as they are in our ideas and notions; that they required man ſhould be the final cauſe of the world, and his happineſs the final cauſe of man. Inſtead of reaſoning from what they imagine theſe attributes, and an eternal reaſon of things required that God ſhould do, let them be content to know what his infinite wiſdom and power have done, and to reaſon from thence. Let them not aſſume, in ſhort, what they have no ſufficient grounds to aſſume, and they will accuſe the Supreme Being of injuſtice no longer.

It may be ſaid, and I know it will be ſaid, that we muſt aſſume at leaſt thus much, that God acts always according to the moral fitneſs of things, or we muſt aſſume ſomething worſe, we muſt aſſume that he acts arbitrarily; and that, on this ſuppoſition, we leave ourſelves no rule by which to judge

of his proceedings, nor to diſtinguiſh certainly between a true and a falſe revelation. Now, I am far from denying, that there is an eternal reaſon. God is himſelf that reaſon, and there is no doubt that he proceeds with his creatures in all the exertions of his power, determined by infinite wiſdom, according to the fitneſs of things. But the queſtion is, what are the criterions of this moral fitneſs relatively to man? I think then, that they are to us, and can be only, that conſtitution of things which we call the human ſyſtem, and the notions which ariſe naturally in our minds on the conſideration of it, or which we are able to deduce immediately, and obviouſly, from it. When we keep within theſe bounds, we are in no danger of being impoſed upon, concerning the will of God, nor by any falſe revelation. But when we go beyond them, we are apt to impoſe on ourſelves; for, to return ſome of Clarke's words upon him, tho' there is a natural and unalterable difference between good and evil; yet nothing but the extremeſt ſtupidity of mind, or perverſeneſs of ſpirit, and diſregard to truth, can poſſibly make any man affirm, like him, that moral fitneſſes and unfitneſſes are, even in their applications to our ſcene of action, (and they will be infinitely leſs ſo in their applications to that of God) as manifeſt as mathematical truths. We may diſcover moral fitneſs as we diſcover natural law, but then we muſt be on our guard, leſt we ſhould pervert our notions of moral fitneſs and unfitneſs by wrong applications of them out of our ſyſtem, as we pervert the principles of natural law by wrong applications of them within it. To ſuppoſe, in terms, that the laws of human are the laws of divine nature, would be too abſurd, tho' ſome writers have done no leſs. But it is juſt as abſurd, nay, it is juſt the ſame, to ſuppoſe that the moral fitneſs and unfitneſs of things muſt be in every inſtance, whatever it may be in ſome, exactly the ſame to God as it is to man. He made our ſyſtem for us, not for himſelf; and

tho' we are ſure he cannot exact that we ſhould believe or practice any thing repugnant to the moral fitneſs reſulting from it, we muſt not imagine that, by abſtracting our notions from it, we can render them adequate to that moral fitneſs which is the object of omniſcience, the omniſcience of that Supreme Being who is the author of this, and every other ſyſtem.

The men, who attempt to do this, leave to God nothing more than they aſſume to themſelves, except a greater degree of power: and even this they aſſume to be limited of right by natures as eternal, and as independent as his own, tho' executed, in fact, repugnantly to theſe natures. What theſe natures are they know as well as he; for they ſoar up on platonic wings to the firſt good and the firſt juſt. What his attributes muſt be to be conformable to theſe natures, and what they require of him conſequently, theſe perſons illuminated by an eternal reaſon cannot, therefore, fail to know: and they ſeem to exalt them as if they meaned only by exalting them to aggravate the want of goodneſs and juſtice in the conduct of providence. Let not this paſs for any exaggeration. It is, in plain terms, the ſum of a doctrine they teach in the cant of metaphyſical theology, to which they have accuſtomed the ears of men, and by which they impoſe on their underſtandings. I deſire no better proof of what is here advanced than the twelfth ſection of Clarke's demonſtration, and the firſt of his evidences. The ſubject has been often touched in theſe eſſays, and even in ſome of the laſt paragraphs, but it may be proper, however, to examine this famous argumentation à priori a little more particularly. It is plauſible, for it ſpeaks to the pride of the human heart, and ſubmits the whole œconomy of divine wiſdom to the judgment of man. But I apprehend that it ſuppoſes ſome things very

very doubtful, and affirms others thati mply contradiction. I will enter into it, therefore, in this place, further than I have done, and ſlide or leap from ſubject to ſubject, or revert to the ſame a ſecond, and a third time, in theſe ill connected minutes, as I uſed to do in the converſations they are deſigned to recal.

That there is a fitneſs and unfitneſs of things to one another, a ſuitableneſs and unſuitableneſs of circumſtances to perſons, no reaſonable man will deny. But I ſuſpect, that many reaſonable men will doubt, whether they are founded in natures and qualifications independently on God, and antecedently to his will. They will find it difficult to conceive how fitneſſes, reſulting from the natures of things, or from the qualifications of perſons, can be called antecedent to theſe things, and to theſe perſons: and yet they muſt be ſo, if they are antecedent to that will, by the act of which theſe things and theſe perſons firſt exiſted *. It is ſaid that the exiſtence of things, and the argument requires that the ſame ſhould be ſaid of perſons, depends on the arbitrary will of God. But that when they are created, and as long as they exiſt, their proportions, reſpects, and relations are abſtractly of eternal neceſſity, according to the different natures of things, and the different qualifications of perſons, in one common nature. This I take to be the ſenſe and ſtrength of the argument, which will not appear in my apprehenſion very intelligible, nor, as far as it is intelligible, very concluſive.

We conſider one thing, or one property, one perſon, or one qualification, without conſidering another, and by that

* Evid. p. 87.

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we make a very real, and, I presume, the sole kind of abstraction our minds are capable of making. But to consider the properties of things, or the qualifications of persons, and the fitnesses and unfitnesses resulting from them, as independent natures existing before there were any such things, or any such persons, any such natures, qualifications, circumstances, seems to me a fictitious abstraction doubly. It assumes that we have ideas which we have not, and that the modes of being, by which things and persons are what they are, may be conceived as adventitious to them, instead of being conceived as so constitutive of them that they could not be without the things, and persons, nor these without them. By assuming one of these imaginary abstractions, men are led to assume the other, and their mistake about the operations of nature is connected with that about the operations of their own minds.

The modes of being, and the properties of things are inseparable from them, even in imagination, which might be an argument the more to persuade that they are the same specific natures, and that his will, which constituted these natures, constituted, at the same time, all that is essential to them. But tho' we cannot separate in this manner, we can take the properties of things, both physical and moral, into distinct consideration. This philosophers have done with honor to themselves, and advantage to others. But when they have been long accustomed to such abstract considerations, and have established certain mathematical and moral truths upon them, some of these philosophers assume, that these general notions are natures independent on God, and in themselves of eternal necessity. God has made triangles and men. But triangularity they say, and they might say just as well humanity, are independent natures, antecedent to his will, and that do not

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owe their original to arbitrary and positive appointment. That there are necessary truths, mathematical and moral, and that such they must be, as long as there are men, and as the present system of things continues, is certain. But they would not be called, perhaps, eternal truths, nor would these notions be represented like eternal and independent natures, if it was more considered, that the self-existent Being is the fountain of all existence, and that, since every thing exists by his will, it must exist according to his will; for which reason it seems as absurd to say, that when he made man, he could give him no other nature than the human, which was therefore necessarily, not arbitrarily given, as it would be to say, that, when he made a man, he did not make a tree. A man with the properties of a tree would not be a man. A tree with the properties of a man would not be a tree. The same will which made each, made the properties of each. It is one and the same act, and to say that the nature of any thing, or the truths resulting from it, are independent, in any sense, on the will that made them, seems to me, therefore, to imply contradiction.

Clarke quotes a passage from Plato, wherein that philosopher says, according to his translation, that "as in matters "of sense the reason, why a thing is visible, is not because it "is seen, but it is, therefore, seen because it is visible: so in "matters of natural reason and morality, that which is holy "and good, is not, therefore, holy and good because it is "commanded to be done, but it is, therefore, commanded "by God because it is holy and good." If I would cavil a little, I might shew that this quotation does not serve the doctor's purpose, nor prove that Plato was of his mind in asserting, that moral obligations are, primarily and originally, antecedent to the will of God, if by will be meant his determination that they

they ſhould be obligatory, when he made a moral world; and if by will he meant a poſitive command, ſignified by revelation, the quotation from PLATO, who knew nothing of any ſuch revelation, is ſtrangely abſurd. Things may be ſeen, becauſe they are viſible, they are not viſible, becauſe they are ſeen. Let it be ſo. Does this prove that the philoſopher thought viſibility, any more than viſion, an eternal independent nature? Might he not think, that GOD made things to be ſeen, and creatures to ſee, and that viſibility and viſion began when he willed the phyſical ſyſtem into exiſtence? Thus, again, that which is good, is not ſuch becauſe it is commanded, but it is commanded becauſe it is good. Will it follow from this expreſſion, that good is, according to PLATO, an eternal independent nature? Will it not follow as naturally, that good and evil began when GOD willed the moral ſyſtem into exiſtence, and that he commanded the former by the laws of their nature, at the ſame time when he created moral agents capable of either? This remark may ſerve, at leaſt, to ſhew how apt even the beſt writers are to amuſe themſelves, and to impoſe on others by a mere gingle of words, and to quote what makes againſt them, or does not make for them.

BUT now, having made this remark, I am ready to acknowledge, that PLATO meaned by this paſſage in his Euthyphro the firſt good, that independent nature which reſides among others in his imaginary region of eternal ideas. This ſhould be his meaning, whatever his words in this place import, to make them conſiſtent with his doctrine, and appoſite to the preſent diſpute, wherein PLATO and the platonics run into one extreme, as HOBBES and the hobbiſts into another. The former aſſume an eternal morality, antecedent not only to any ſignification, but to any actual determination of the will of GOD. The latter aſſume, that there was no moral duty, no

difference, no distinction made between just and unjust, moral good and evil, till the will of man made this distinction by civil constitutions, and positive laws. It seems to me, that both these opinions tend to weaken the authority of natural religion. By the first, God published, indeed, a moral law, when he made moral agents. But he was not properly the legislator. The law existed before them, and it binds both him and them. By the second, he has not so much as the appearance of legislature. He made a moral world, indeed, but he made it in confusion, and he left it without any rule, till at last his creatures made one for themselves. He brought order out of the confusion of a physical, they out of that of a moral chaos. How preferable is the middle opinion between these two extremes, that God instituted moral obligations when he made moral agents, that the law of their nature is the law of his will, and that, how indifferent soever we may presume every thing is to him before his will has determined it to be, it becomes, after this determination, a necessary, tho' created, nature? Such justice is in man, tho' in God it may be nothing more than one mode of his infinite wisdom. As long as there are men, this nature must exist. Where it will be, and what it will be, when they and this moral system are at an end, let those able persons, who know so well where and what it was before they both began to exist, determine. If I insist much on this point, I do not pretend to clear it from all the difficulties that lie in the way, neither by what is said here, nor by what has been said elsewhere, nor by what I may say hereafter. There are many on either side that have perplexed, and may continue to perplex, much better heads than mine. But, in the first place, I feel an insuperable repugnancy to own that any thing is independent on God; and in the next place, I am shocked at the consequences that are drawn from this doctrine.

LIX.

HE who dares to affirm, that there are eternal ſelf-exiſtent natures independent on GOD, is bold enough. But what ſhall we ſay to thoſe who dare to affirm, that theſe eternal natures reſulting from the eternal fitneſſes and unfitneſſes, agreements and diſagreements, proportions and diſproportions of things, are abſolutely and neceſſarily, in themſelves, what they appear to be to the underſtandings of all intelligent beings? I do not add the exception, except thoſe who underſtand things to be what they are not, becauſe it is unneceſſary to any other purpoſe than that of an evaſion, which CLARKE, like a cunning diſputant, foreſaw he might want and did want. What ſhall we ſay of thoſe who think it neceſſary to bring proofs to ſhew that GOD muſt know what his rational creatures may know concerning theſe eternal natures independent on him, and who conclude from thence, that the rule of divine and human conduct is the ſame? GOD diſdains not to obſerve this rule, it is ſaid, as the law of his actions, and he appeals to men for his obſervation of it; which matter of fact is aſſerted on the authority of a chapter in EZECHIEL *, where the prophet, like a prophet and a poet, introduces GOD expoſtulating with the Jews in this ſtile, and appealing to them for the equity of his proceedings. BISHOP CUMBERLAND, who is quoted by CLARKE †, carries theſe notions ſtill further, when he maintains in his ſeventh chapter ‡, with much obſcure ſubtilty, not only that the rules of this law are the dictates of divine intelligence to GOD himſelf, but that the dominion of GOD over all his creatures is a right derived from theſe very rules, and from his wiſdom, which pre-

* Cap. 18. † Evid. p. 88. ‡ de Leg. Naturæ.

ſcribes them to him. I ſhall not enter on a diſcuſſion, which is not immediately neceſſary to the preſent purpoſe. I ſhall only ſay, that the wiſdom as well as the power of GOD in the creation, preſervation, and government of all things is, without doubt, a true and joint foundation of his dominion over them, and that there ſeems to be no need of excluding one of the two, GOD's irreſiſtible power, in order to obviate the conſequences which the good biſhop ſuſpected that HOBBES intended. Let us keep out of theſe miſts, and purſue our ſubject in a clearer light.

I aſk then, if nothing leſs than infinite knowledge, infinite wiſdom, and abſolute independency be neceſſary to make it impoſſible that the Supreme Being ſhould be ignorant in any reſpect of the eternal natures, on which the eternal reaſon of things is founded, how can it be ſaid with the leaſt appearance of truth, that theſe aſſumed natures appear juſt ſuch as they are abſolutely and neceſſarily in themſelves to the underſtandings of all intelligent beings, and become conſtantly the rule of their actions? Have we then infinite knowledge, infinite wiſdom and abſolute independency? The human mind apprehends clearly enough the groſs differences of things in the moral ſyſtem, as human ſenſe does in the phyſical. But in the former as in the latter, the nicer differences are not ſo perceptible. We have not any knowledge of the firſt qualities of ſubſtances. It is enough for us, to have ſome knowledge of the ſecond, of thoſe which affect us immediately. It is in vain, that we attempt to go higher in ſearch of ſcientifical knowledge, and even about theſe we are very liable to miſtakes. Much in the ſame manner we know ſomething of moral entities, allow me the uſe of this metaphyſical word for once, as they ariſe in our moral ſyſtem, and are able to affirm many general truths concerning them. But it is in vain, that we

attempt to go higher in our ſearch, or to know any thing more about them than GOD has ſhewn us in the actual conſtitution of things, and even when we judge of them thus, and make particular applications of the general laws of our nature, we are very liable to miſtakes. We are not liable to theſe miſtakes in ſuch caſes only as are very far from occurring frequently, which CLARKE affirms, but we are liable to them in ſuch as occur the moſt frequently, whether they relate to public or to private life. The contrary laws that legiſlators have made, the contrary opinions that caſuiſts daily give in matters of morality, wherein ſome of them muſt have been miſtaken, are evident proofs of this.

THAT there are things fit and unfit, right and wrong, juſt and unjuſt, in the human ſyſtem, and diſcernible by human reaſon, as far as our natural imperfections admit, I acknowledge moſt readily. But from the difficulty we have to judge, and from the uncertainty of our judgments in a multitude of caſes which lie within our bounds, I would demonſtrate the folly of thoſe who affect to have knowledge beyond them. They pretend dogmatically to deduce from abſtract eternal natures what theſe natures require of GOD, whilſt they are at the ſame time unable on many occaſions to deduce from the conſtitution of their own ſyſtem, and the laws of their own nature, with preciſion and certainty, what theſe require of them, and what is right or wrong, juſt or unjuſt, for them to do. CLARKE employs an alluſion to evade this objection, which would be extremely pretty, if it did not make directly againſt him in the preſent application of it, and the only application that can make it pertinent. There is juſtice, and injuſtice, as certainly as there is white and black *. But as the painter can, by diluting the two colors,

* Evid. p. 45.

not make them terminate in the midſt inſenſibly, for theſe words are mere expletives and mean nothing; but as he can make them run into one another till no eye can diſtinguiſh them, ſo the caſuiſt in law or divinity dilutes right and wrong, juſt and unjuſt, till no mind, not even his own, can unblend and diſtinguiſh them again. If white and black were colors as immutable as they are obvious to human ſight, and if juſtice and injuſtice were abſtract natures immutably obvious to the human underſtanding, this could not be. But neither are the colors immutable, nor the natures ſo fixed and ſo obvious as to be always diſcerned, and in every light alike. This is what I ſay, and what the doctor would, if he could, deny. His learned men, his men who underſtand things to be what they are, not what they are not, blunder about, and contradict one another in matters that are certainly objects of human reaſon, tho' they preſume to ſay that they are guided in their judgments, and directed in their conduct, by the eternal reaſon of things, by a rule that is common to God and them. I will quote the doctor againſt himſelf, on this occaſion. I might do ſo, perhaps, on others. If LYCURGUS had made a law to authorize every man to rob, by violence and murder, whomſoever he met with, ſuch a law could not have been juſtified. But the law which permitted the Spartan youth to ſteal, as abſurd as it was, may bear much diſpute, whether it was abſolutely unjuſt or no. Such an opinion delivered by one, who did not reckon himſelf certainly among thoſe who underſtand things to be what they are not, may authorize, or excuſe, at leaſt, many that have come out of the ſchool of LOYOLA, and therefore I think it proper to recall another Spartan inſtitution in this place. The helotes or ſlaves were made drunk in order to create an averſion to drunkenneſs in the youth by ſuch ridiculous ſpectacles. Far be it from me, and from every lover of truth, and of common ſenſe, to wiſh that the race

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of metaphyſicians and caſuiſts ſhould increaſe, or ſo much as continue. But ſince there are, have been, and will be ſuch men in all ages, it is very reaſonable to wiſh that they may ſerve to the ſame good purpoſe that the helotes did at Sparta, and that their delirium, inſtead of impoſing on others, and even infecting many, may be at length laughed out of the world.

It may ſeem ſtrange to the cool reflections of common ſenſe, that any men, who have the uſe of their reaſon, and thoſe eſpecially who would be thought to have cultivated and improved it moſt, ſhould attempt to perſuade us that complex notions of the moral kind, for I meddle with no other, and ſuch as we call mixed modes, are eternal natures, and independent on God, when theſe perſons muſt or may know intuitively that they are dependent on man. I have ſaid already, and I muſt repeat here, that the mind frames them as it has occaſion for them, gives to each a name, and keeps them in ſtore as artificial inſtruments of the underſtanding. They exiſt variouſly, in various minds, nay ſometimes in the ſame mind; but when they exiſt in no mind, theſe eternal immutable natures exiſt no where. Yet ſuch as they are, we are to believe them founded in the eternal fitneſſes of things; we are to believe the moral attributes of God founded in them; we are to deduce from them, and from theſe attributes, what God is under a moral neceſſity of doing, and what it is his will that men ſhould do; nay we are to prove in a circle that there is a God, becauſe there are ſuch natures*, and that there are ſuch natures becauſe there is a God. Theſe are opinions which common ſenſe will be hardly induced to adopt, and yet metaphyſical and artificial theology

* Vid. Cudworth of eter. moral.

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teach them. As proud as we are of our rationality, certain it is that reaſon unmixed, uninfluenced, has leſs to do than we imagine in framing the opinions, and directing the judgments of men.

Let us change the image, and obſerve that it happens to reaſon, as it happens to inſtruments ill tuned. The ſtrings are left ſometimes too lax, and are ſometimes wound up too high. In one caſe, they give no ſound at all, or one that is lifeleſs and heavy. In the other, the noiſe they make is great, it fills the ear, but it carries no true harmony to the ſoul. By the firſt we may allude to reaſon weak and unimproved, by the ſecond to reaſon ſtrained into all the abſtractions of metaphyſics, and we may diſcern good ſenſe between theſe extremes, that is, reaſon at it's proper tone.

There is no ſubject on which it is more important, that reaſon ſhould be kept ſtrictly to this tone, than that of the firſt philoſophy, and there is no ſubject on which it is ſo liable to be let down below it, or wound up above it. I am not to ſpeak here of the firſt, of that inſenſibility and ſtupidity wherein a great part of mankind is immerſed, but of that activity of the mind which raiſes ſome of them ſo far above it. Now among theſe, they who apply themſelves to the firſt philoſophy, apply themſelves to the nobleſt objects that can demand the attention of their mind, to the exiſtence of an all-perfect Being, to the infinite wiſdom and power that are manifeſted in his works, and to the ſignifications of his will, concerning the duties we owe to him, and to one another. From theſe different ſubjects ariſe two kinds of philoſophy, divine philoſophy or theology, moral philoſophy or ethics. Like different branches of the ſame tree, they ſpring from the ſame root, and that root is the actual ſyſtem of things. As high as they

they can be trained up from hence, they bear the genuine fruit of knowledge. But when fantaſtical gardeners bend the tops of the higheſt ſprigs, like the ficus indica, down to earth; if they take root, they bear it of a baſtard kind, and ſerve only to plant a labyrinth wherein the gardeners themſelves are loſt. Such fantaſtical gardeners our metaphyſicians are. When they have acquired ideas from the actual ſyſtem of things, and have carried their knowledge up from the creation to that ſelf-exiſtent, intelligent Being, the Creator, they diſdain to reaſon any longer à poſteriori. They frame an hypotheſis, with much agitation of their minds, out of the ideas and notions they have acquired in this manner, and reaſon from it without any further regard to the phænomena. This method of philoſophiſing has produced often nothing more than impudent aſſertions. Such was the theology of the epicureans, if that may be called ſo: and that of the ſtoics too, as much as they oppoſed the former, and as good theiſts as they were eſteemed on this account, was little better.

LX.

WHILST the folly laſted among the antient philoſophers of making univerſal ſyſtems, and of explaining the whole ſcheme, order and ſtate of things, he who had not given a great part of his ſyſtem to theology, would have gained little reputation. This PLATO ſaw, and he put theology into every thing he taught. I can eaſily imagine, that the ſame progreſs was made in compoſing theſe ſpiritual romances, that we ſee has been made in compoſing thoſe of a different kind. AMADIS OF GAUL, and many more, which the niece, the curate and the barber threw out of Don QUIXOTE's windows, and burned in his yard, were writ without any regard to

to probability, and no man could read them with any attention, nor ſuffer his imagination to wander long ſo extravagantly, who was not as mad as the knight of La Mancha. After theſe writers, La Calprenade aroſe, like another Plato, and by mixing fiction ingeniouſly with the truth of hiſtory, he compoſed romances capable of amuſing, and even almoſt of deceiving. But however this may have been, all our metaphyſical writers have rather copied, than improved the platonic ſyſtems, ſo that if the founder of the academy meaned to diſtinguiſh himſelf by his theology, he has ſucceeded beyond any hopes he could conceive. It prevailed in the heathen world, and it has prevailed much more in the chriſtian church. Particular men among the heathen embraced it for the ſame reaſon that he had to teach it, to diſtinguiſh themſelves, and to acquire a name in philoſophy. Or elſe they were determined to it, like Plotinus and Porphyry, by an enthuſiaſtic turn of mind, which all the religions of thoſe ages and countries were very proper to give, and this theology to confirm. But as ſoon as an entire order of men was ſet apart in the chriſtian church, to inſtruct the world in all matters of a divine or moral nature, and to teach a revelation little different in many inſtances from platoniſm, this philoſophy acquired a new ſtrength, and more motives concurred to maintain it than there had been to eſtabliſh it. The opinions of Plato were employed to illuſtrate the myſteries of the goſpel, and even to recommend them to the belief of ſuch apologiſts as Justin, and of ſuch doctors as Austin. No wonder, therefore, that being conſecrated in this manner, they have been propagated with chriſtianity in every inſtance where they are not directly repugnant to it. No wonder, that theology becoming one of the ſciences in lucrum exeuntes, that is a trade, the profeſſors of it have kept up that marvellous which is the myſtery of the trade, and to which nothing could con-

tribute more than the metaphyſics of PLATO. No wonder, that the doctrine, which we ſpeak of here, ſhould ſtill ſubſiſt, tho' it does not ſeem agreeable to the ſimplicity of true theiſm, nor of ſervice to morality, which would not be the duty of every man, if the principles of it could be underſtood by none but metaphyſicians, nor the obligations of it be well explained, without an intricate deduction of arguments à priori.

THIS the trade, and nothing but the trade, makes neceſſary: and tho' we are told, that proofs à poſteriori are no more than ſecondary conſiderations, I muſt confeſs what I have often felt, that if I had not been convinced of all the great articles of natural religion by my own reflections on the infinite wiſdom and power diſplayed in the univerſe (no part whereof, and therefore not the whole, could be conceived to be ſelf-exiſtent, even if it were conceived to be eternal) on the conſtitution of my own nature, and on that of the ſyſtem to which I belong, I ſhould not have been ſo by all the fine ſpun argumentations à priori. The proofs that reſult immediately from ſuch reflections as theſe are founded in my ſenſitive and intuitive knowledge, and to reſiſt them I muſt renounce my cleareſt and moſt diſtinct ideas. I muſt do little leſs, I muſt accept a flow of mere words, thrown into the form of a demonſtration, for demonſtration, or I muſt take inadequate, incomplete, and obſcure ideas and notions for ſuch as are adequate, complete and clear, if I admit many of the proofs brought by ſome of our moſt famous writers. They preſent us with dim ſpectacles to ſee, what we ſee clearly without any, and by the natural ſtrength of our eyes; or elſe to ſee what is not by nature, nor can be made by art viſible to our internal ſight. They prove as much as needs to be proved, and, therefore, as much as we are able to prove, in order to refute atheiſm, and to eſtabliſh theiſm. But then they mingle this

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real, and connect it with so much fantastical knowledge, that they disgrace and weaken, as much as it is in their power, the former by the latter. It was this very practice which hindered the stoics from beating the epicureans out of the field of controversy, and from imposing silence on those bablers, the academicians. I apprehend, that our divines have brought the same disadvantage on themselves in their disputes with atheists, to whom they would be much more formidable, if they neither pursued the practice, spoken of here, nor made that occasional alliance with them against the dispensations of providence, which is spoken of above.

To make this conduct appear the less strange, and to take off our wonder at it, we must not only consider that the religious society is composed of as arrant men as the civil, seduced by the same affections, transported by the same passions, and that our divines have at least as much the ostentation of knowledge, superior to that of other men, as those antient philosophers had, who pretended that philosophy was the science of all things divine and human, or the schoolmen who were ready to dispute de omni scibili; but we must consider further, that they assume a right which the antient philosophers did not claim, tho' PYTHAGORAS seems to have intended it, a right to instruct mankind in natural as well as in revealed religion, and have made, of the exercise of this right, a very lucrative trade. To keep this trade in repute, therefore, and themselves with it, two things have been thought necessary, and are really so. It has been thought necessary to preserve the mystery which they found established in one part by the first professors of it, and to introduce mystery into the other. The method they take serves both these purposes. They slide into the proofs of natural, what they judge necessary to impose their artificial theology. From these principles, laid

out of vulgar ſight, and, in truth, out of their own, they deduce even moral obligations: and thus the whole ſum of religion falls under the direction of the religious ſociety. How this ſociety directs it, and to what purpoſes principally, appears plainly enough in the inſtance before us.

LXI.

WHATEVER may be determined about the moral fitneſſes and unfitneſſes of things, and the ſuitableneſs and unſuitableneſs of circumſtances to perſons, all of which are conceived to be eternal becauſe we cannot conceive them to have been ever otherwiſe than they are, certain it is that they become diſcernible to us in our ſyſtem alone; and that altho' they are immutable natures in it, from whence all our obligations ariſe, and may be aſſumed to be abſolutely and in themſelves eternal as well as immutable, and, therefore, independent, if philoſophers pleaſe to call them ſo; yet we neither know, nor can know any more about them than what the actual conſtitution of this ſyſtem ſhews us. In ſome other ſyſtem we might not have had the ſame ideas, or having them we might not have had the ſame occaſions of collecting them into the ſame complex modes. This we ſee happen in different countries, and what happens in different countries might ſurely happen in different ſyſtems. It is ſufficient, therefore, to eſtabliſh our moral obligations, that we conſider them relatively to our own ſyſtem. From thence they ariſe: and ſince they ariſe from thence, it muſt be the will of that Being who made the ſyſtem, that we ſhould obſerve and practice them. The aſſumed eternity of morality cannot make it more obligatory. Why then are ſuch pains taken to prove it eternal? The reaſon is obvious. If we went no higher than our own ſyſtem, the principles of it would be

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eaſily diſcovered, the criterion of moral good and evil, of juſt and unjuſt would be fixed, and at leaſt there would be no need of conſulting divines about it. They lead the minds of men, therefore, to contemplate objects that are out of their ſyſtem, and renew the platonic doctrine of eternal ideas, forms, eſſences, natures, according to which they aſſume that the Supreme Being regulates his own conduct, and all his rational creatures are obliged to regulate theirs by the eternal reaſon of things.

THEY prove the exiſtence of an all-perfect Being, the Creator and Governor of the univerſe, and to demonſtrate his infinite wiſdom and power they appeal to his works. But when they have done this, which includes the whole of natural theology, and ſerves abundantly all the ends of natural religion, they parcel out a divine moral nature into various attributes like the human, and determine preciſely what theſe attributes require that GOD ſhould do, to make his will conformable to the eternal ideas of fitneſs which are ſo many independent natures. Thus they aſſume that GOD knows after the manner of men by ideas, that his moral attributes are not barely names that we give to various manifeſtations of the infinite wiſdom of one ſimple uncompounded Being, but that they are in him, what they are in us, diſtinct affections, diſpoſitions, habitudes; that they are in him the very ſame that they are in our ideas, being derived from the ſame eternal natures, and known by the ſame eternal reaſon; in fine, that we have no need to judge of his moral attributes as we judge of his phyſical, but are able to determine what they require that he ſhould do, without any regard to what he has done. This is in plain and unexaggerated terms the very doctrine which CLARKE and other divines teach, preſumptuous and prophane as it is, under the diſguiſe of modeſt and pious expreſſions.

By

By theſe they frequently impoſe on readers who attend more to their theological cant than to their meaning, and the neceſſary conſequences of what they advance; whilſt they give other readers a juſt occaſion to ſay of them what CLARKE * ſays of ſome theiſts, it matters not at all how honorably they may ſeem to ſpeak . . . . of GOD, but what . . . . . muſt needs in all reaſon be ſuppoſed to be their true opinion.

WHEN we reaſon humbly and cautiouſly from the phænomena, we have a ſure criterion to guide our judgments, and the undoubted word of GOD declared in his works, wherein he ſpeaks moſt intelligibly to us, to authorize them. When we reaſon otherwiſe, not from the phænomena but to them, we have no ſuch criterion to guide, nor any word but the precarious word of man to authorize, our judgments. In the the place of real, we ſubſtitute fantaſtic natures, and in the place of common ſenſe an imaginary reaſon of things. This ſublime metaphyſical reaſon, which deals ſo much in abſtract ideas, is ſo imaginary, and by conſequence ſo vague, that it ſerves the purpoſe of every divine alike in all their diſcordant opinions. Metaphyſician, I think, never convinced metaphyſician: neither is there any thing ſo abſurd which may not be made in this method problematical: and when it is once made ſo, the abſurdity is called a demonſtration. The ſyſtem of SPINOZA, derived at leaſt from that of DES CARTES, is very abſurd, and ſo are many propoſitions in that of HOBBES. But there are ſpinoziſts and hobbiſts ſtill in the world, as well as carteſians, and there might be poſſibly ſtill more if metaphyſical arms alone were employed againſt them. Let it not be ſaid that they are men of depraved underſtandings, and depraved morals. This is to rail, not to argue. Their parts

* Quaſi ego id curem quid ille aiat aut neget. Illud quæro, quid ei conſentaneum ſit dicere. CIC. de fin. Lib. 2.

and

and their morals, are, no doubt, in general as good as thoſe of the men who oppoſe them; and if they conclude abſurdly it is becauſe they reaſon abſurdly, as they reaſon abſurdly becauſe they purſue an abſurd method: for, to bring this diſcourſe home to the preſent purpoſe, the fault is ſo truly in the method, that this aſſumed eternal reaſon has miſled theiſts as well as atheiſts, to ſuch a degree that the laſt are not always the moſt impious of the two. The opinions mentioned in the laſt paragraph, might ſtand for ſufficient proofs. But there are many more. He who aſſerts, for inſtance, on his notions of the eternal fitneſſes and unfitneſſes, and of the eternal reaſon of things, that the providence of GOD in the preſent ſtate of mankind would be convicted of injuſtice, if there were only one innocent man unhappy, when it is notorious that there are ſeveral, or that GOD is unjuſt, becauſe particular providences do not enough diſtinguiſh the virtuous from the wicked, is as groſsly abſurd, and much more impious than HOBBES, when he aſſerts that there is no ſuch thing as innocence, nor guilt, till they are diſtinguiſhed by civil laws, and the authority of the magiſtrate. He who aſſerts that predeſtination of millions to damnation, before they are capable of being either innocent or guilty, is agreeable to the divine attributes, and an exertion of juriſdiction and power not at all repugnant to the eternal fitneſs and reaſon of things, in a Being who is not the Governor alone but the Creator of all beings, and has an abſolute right to diſpoſe of them as he ſhall think fit, is as impious as SPINOZA, who aſſerts one ſole ſubſtance, and who denies, as in effect he did deny, any Creator and Governor of the univerſe.

THE impious doctrine of predeſtination, ſuch as it has been taught and is ſtill taught among chriſtians, is ſoftened extremely at leaſt, and the aſſumed proceedings of GOD towards men

men are brought almoſt within the bounds of credibility, by LOCKE's forced expoſition of the famous ninth chapter of the epiſtle to the Romans. He underſtands what is ſaid of the potter, who has a power to make one veſſel to honor, and another to diſhonor, out of the ſame lump of clay, to refer to men nationally, not perſonally, nor with regard to an eternal ſtate, but to the right which God has of exalting one nation and depreſſing another, according to his good pleaſure and the merits or demerits of ſuch political bodies. This ſenſe may be admitted, whilſt that of an univerſal and abſolute predeſtination of every individual, ſuch as it is taught, deſerves to be rejected with horror. It may be admitted the better, perhaps, becauſe it is conformable enough to the ſanctions of the law of nature. According to theſe which regard mankind in general, as the law was given to mankind in general, virtue tends to the happineſs, and vice to the miſery of their ſeveral ſocieties: and there ſeems, therefore, no great preſumption in aſſuming that God does in any particular caſe, by a particular diſpenſation, that which is agreeable to the general tenor of his providence, and to the natural courſe of things. But it is impious to ſuppoſe that he acts, relatively to particular men, againſt the general tenor of his providence, and in a manner that ſhews partiality in his favors, cruelty in his judgments, and an arbitrary ſpirit in all his proceedings, directly oppoſite to that ſpirit of impartiality and benignity, which makes his ſun to riſe, and his rain to fall, on the juſt and unjuſt. Mr. LOCKE's expoſition of St. PAUL's text is in the firſt of theſe caſes. St. AUSTIN's, and that of many divines who had once the vogue of orthodoxy, is in the ſecond. In what ſenſe the apoſtle underſtood his own doctrine, I preſume not to determine. Thus much is certain, if he underſtood it as LOCKE did, he reaſoned very rabinically, when he quoted the preference given to JACOB over a much better man,

man, over ESAU, and the deliverance of the Iſraelites, and the deſtruction of the Ægyptians by God for the glory of his name, in order to conclude à fortiori, that the ſame God might, by virtue of the ſame power, reject the Jews, who were literally the ſeed of ABRAHAM, for refuſing to acknowledge the Meſſiah, and call the gentiles, who were figuratively this ſeed, for conſenting to acknowledge him.

I HAVE ſaid already, how difficult it is to reconcile the ſcheme of particular providences to the general courſe of nature: and he who conſiders the many forced ſuppoſitions that ingenious men have made, to get over the difficulty, will be only the more convinced that it is inſuperable. This ſcheme is, indeed, very unneceſſary to thoſe who hold an abſolute predeſtination, and ſince they leave neither freedom of will in man, nor what is called contingency in the courſe of events, they ſeem to anticipate any want of particular providences by ſuppoſing ſomewhat ſtill leſs conceivable. We comprehend as little God's manner of knowing, as we do his manner of being, and we ſhould, therefore, preſume to reaſon no more about one, than about the other. But theſe men, applying their ideas of human to the divine knowledge, maintain that God could not foreknow certainly what is to happen, if he did not make it neceſſary and certain by pre-ordaining that it ſhould happen. So they argue on their notion of preſcience. Now, it ſeems, and it has ſeemed to me ever ſince I turned my thoughts to ſubjects of this kind, that the whole ſyſtem of predeſtination may be blown up by the change of an improper word. Let us talk no more of preſcience, nor imagine things future relatively to God, as they are relatively to man. Let us acknowledge his omniſcience, to which the future is like the preſent, and we may conceive, without any extraordinary effort of mind, that he knows, tho' he does not pre-ordain, in the ſenſe

of predeſtinating, the future. If we perſuade ourſelves of this great truth, that the whole ſeries of things is, at all times, actually preſent to the divine mind, we may ſay as properly that GOD knows things becauſe they are actual to him, and not that they are actual to him becauſe he knows them, or much leſs pre-ordains them; as we ſay, that things are ſeen by us becauſe they are viſible, and not that they are viſible becauſe they are ſeen by us. They, who talk ſo much of preſcience and predeſtination, would do well to conſider, whether it be not more reaſonable to think in this manner, than to adopt all the abſurd, as well as impious, conſequences that flow from their hypotheſis, according to which there muſt be not one general ſyſtem of nature, but as many natural and moral ſyſtems, as there are rational creatures, and the providence of GOD muſt be employed to carry on this aggregate of ſyſtems ſo diſtinctly and ſo ſteadily, that the innocence and happineſs of ſome, and the guilt and miſery of others, may be effectually ſecured, agreeable to their ſeveral predeſtinations.

LXII.

THE fact, that there are ſuch particular providences as have been aſſumed, which would be ſo many miracles, in the ſtrict ſenſe of the word, if they were real, cannot be proved; unleſs we accept for proofs, in an age when miracles are ſcarce pretended out of your church, and ſcarce believed in it, all the ridiculous ſtories that paſſed in times of ignorance and ſuperſtition. I ſaid that particular providences would be miracles, if they were real, and ſuch they would be ſtrictly, whether they were contrary to the eſtabliſhed courſe of nature or not; for the miracle conſiſts in the extraordinary interpoſition as much as in the nature of the thing brought to paſs.

paſs. In one caſe, there could be no doubt of ſuch an extraordinary and miraculous interpoſition. In the other, doubts might ariſe, the opinions of men might be divided, and yet the miracle be as real in one as in the other. Nay, the reality might be made evident enough to remove theſe doubts by the occaſions, by the circumſtances, by the repetition of it on ſimilar occaſions, and with ſimilar circumſtances; and, above all, by this circumſtance, that the aſſumed particular providence was a direct anſwer to particular prayers, and acts of devotion offered up to procure it. Should fire rain down from heaven to burn one city, and the walls of another fall at the ſound of the beſiegers trumpets, ſhould a deſtroying angel put one army to death in a night, and the ſun ſtand ſtill to give time for the entire defeat of another, neither the beſiegers nor the beſieged, the victorious nor the vanquiſhed, could fail to ſee the omnipotent hand of God in theſe events. Should abundant ſhowers deſcend from the clouds, after a long drought, or fair weather ſucceed a wet ſeaſon, tho' nothing is more in the ordinary courſe of nature than theſe phænomena, they would be eſteemed particular providences, very reaſonably, at Paris, if they happened as conſtantly as the ſhrine of ſaint Genevieve is carried in proceſſion to procure one or the other.

Innumerable caſes of theſe kinds may be put hypothetically; but happily for mankind, experience furniſhes no authentic examples of the firſt ſort, nor any well enough aſcertained to become proofs of the ſecond. All the inſtances that can be brought of providences, which men aſſume to be particular, are ſo very like to the events which happen in the ordinary courſe of things, that they fall under the head of ſuch as are problematical, and as are made particular by nothing but the voluntary applications of them. I ſay happily it is

ſo; for if it was otherwiſe, if providences were directed according to the different deſires, and even wants of men equally well entituled to the divine favor, the whole order of nature, phyſical and moral, would be ſubverted, and the affairs of mankind would fall into the utmoſt confuſion. The laws of gravitation, for inſtance, muſt be ſometimes ſuſpended, and ſometimes their effect muſt be precipitated. The tottering edifice muſt be kept miraculouſly from falling, whilſt innocent men lived in it, or paſſed under it; and the fall of it muſt be as miraculouſly determined to cruſh the guilty inhabitant or paſſenger. The free will of man, which no one can deny that he has without lying or renouncing his intuitive knowledge, and which was ſo much regarded by GOD, that we are told he ſuffered ADAM to fall, and to involve all mankind in his guilt, rather than reſtrain it for a moment, for a moment would have ſaved us from original ſin: this free will muſt be often not only reſtrained, but determined irreſiſtibly by ſtill whiſpers, ſecret ſuggeſtions, and ſudden influences.

How all this can be effected, and eſpecially in compliances with the wants and petitions of men ſo different and ſo repugnant to one another, is not only hard to ſay, but the very ſuppoſition may ſeem to imply contradiction with what we know of the conſtitution of things, and with our cleareſt and moſt diſtinct ideas. The affairs of men are connected by ſo many various relations, that the particular providence which puts a force on the mechanical laws of nature, and on the freedom of the human will, muſt do this very often, not in one or two inſtances alone, but in a multitude, to have it's effect in one. Again. The circumſtances of individuals, the public conjunctures wherein numbers are involved, and the merits and demerits of particular men, as well as of collective bodies, are

ſo nearly alike, and they return ſo often to be equally objects of theſe ſuppoſed providences, that no one who does not think himſelf at liberty to affirm or deny any thing that his precarious hypotheſis requires, will dare to pronounce where theſe providences have been, or ſhould have been employed, and where not. The ſcheme, if it were true, would be univerſal in extent, and continual in time; from whence theſe great abſurdities ariſe, that the world would be governed by miracles till miracles loſt their name, that the eſtabliſhed order of natural cauſes and effects would be ſubverted, that the general rule would be aſorbed in the exceptions to it, or that God would govern his human creatures by two rules that do not conſiſt very well together, ſince by one of them the wants and the petitions of theſe creatures would be ſubmitted to one common providence which carried on the affairs of the world, according to the firſt conſtitution and original laws of it: and by the other, this common providence would break, if I may ſay ſo, into a multitude of particular providences, for the ſupply of theſe wants and the grant of theſe petitions, every one of which is an appeal to the ſecond rule of government againſt the firſt.

Among other attempts which have been made to ſolve theſe difficulties, and to reconcile the aſſumed ſcheme to the actual and viſible, it has been urged, that God may poſſibly have ſo ordered the whole ſeries of things, from the commencement to the conſummation of this ſyſtem *, that all particular caſes may have been provided for in the original deſign, that they may be parts of it, and, therefore, conſiſtent with it. It has been urged further, that the particular natures and actions of all the ſons of Adam having been known to God, it is very poſſible that he may introduce them into the world

* Relig. of nat. delin.

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at ſuch times, and in ſuch places and circumſtances, that they may be, even according to the general courſe of nature, the inſtruments or the objects of particular providences. Theſe are very arbitrary ſuppoſitions, and ſuch ſurely as give little ſatisfaction to the mind. Without entering further than they deſerve into the examination of them, it may be ſaid, and it may be ſhewn, that they come up very nearly to that of an abſolute predeſtination, and are at leaſt as whimſically invented to this purpoſe, as that of a pre-eſtabliſhed harmony is to another. The example of the planets, which is brought to illuſtrate one of theſe hypotheſes, will not appear extremely appoſite. They are diſpoſed ſo as to perform their dance regularly, in various conjunctions and oppoſitions, without any new impreſſions, or any alterations in the laws of motion. But is this the caſe of moral and free agents? The planets make their revolutions, and maintain their order, by the invariable laws of their ſyſtem, which nothing but the will of GOD can alter. They have, in themſelves, no principle that can determine their motions in contradiction to theſe laws. But whether we ſuppoſe ſituations and conjunctures prepared for men, or men for ſituations and conjunctures, they may act, by the freedom of their will, againſt all theſe preparations and deſtinations in ſpight of time, place, and circumſtance. But GOD foreſaw that they would not, ſays the metaphyſician, and you aſſert that GOD may foreſee future events without pre-ordaining them. Yes, foreſee, or rather ſee, as he knows all the moſt contingent events that happen in the courſe of his general providence, but not provide for particular caſes, nor determine the exiſtence of particular men, in the manner aſſumed, without pre-ordaining. Their voluntary actions may coincide with an unpredeſtinated ſtate of things. But that certain ideal men ſhould come into exiſtence to perform theſe voluntary actions in ſuch an unpre-

deſtinated

deſtinated conjuncture preciſely, is a very evident predeſtination, and as much a particular providence as if theſe diſpoſitions, and theſe conjunctures, had been the effects of many miraculous interpoſitions.

It will be of little ſervice to the ſcheme of particular providences to ſay, like Wollaston, that there may be incorporeal, at leaſt inviſible beings, of intellects and powers ſuperior to men, and capable of mighty things; and that theſe beings may be the miniſters of God, and the authors of many of theſe providences; for that there may be, is no proof that there are ſuch beings. To affirm that we ſtand in the higheſt rank of intellectual creatures, would be extreme folly; and to deny that there may be a chain of intelligence, through ſeveral ſyſtems, up from man, would be to contradict without reaſon, what reaſon and analogy render very probable. That ſuch creatures may be the inhabitants of other planets, and diſperſed in theſe habitations, through the univerſe, is a notion ſo favored by appearances, and ſo agreeable to the majeſty of God, and to the immenſity of his works, that no reaſonable man will reject, in the preſent improved ſtate of aſtronomy, what ſome of the moſt antient aſtronomers ſuſpected. But the difference is great between adopting an opinion thus founded, and the opinions of antient aſtrologers, and of the knaves or madmen who profeſſed theurgic magic. Yet theſe were the firſt philoſophers who invented ſuch beings as are ſtill aſſumed. They impoſed them on the eaſt, and the eaſt has impoſed them on the weſt. They were not a little embarraſſed about their habitations. They placed ſome in heaven. Theſe were the angels, or meſſengers, whom the Supreme Being employed on the moſt important occaſions; and, not to enter into the more perplexed and obſcure parts of this doctrine, the greateſt number of them were dæmons and genii, who rambled about in imaginary

nary ſpaces, the intermundia of EPICURUS, but principally in our atmoſphere, that they might be at hand to take care of men and to direct the conduct of human affairs. But now, admitting that there are ſuch beings, and that they are thus employed; I would aſk, do they act by the immediate command of God, or do they not? If you, who defend the ſcheme of particular providences, ſay that they do; you leave the matter juſt where it was, and GOD governs the world no longer by his general providence alone, but mediately, if not immediately, by particular providences likewiſe, ſo little conſiſtent with it that they would be uſeleſs, if they were not wrought in oppoſition to it, or to ſupply the defects of it. If you ſay that they do not; under how ſtrange a government do you place mankind, when you give any ſhare of it to theſe beings, and ſuppoſe that they exerciſe it in proper places, and according to their greater abilities!

I neither ſay, nor think, that divines mean to blaſpheme. GOD forbid that I ſhould be as uncharitable as they are. But this I ſay, that he who follows them cannot avoid preſumption and prophaneneſs, and muſt be much on his guard to avoid blaſphemy. Conſider, under one view, their whole proceeding. GOD made the world, they ſay, for the ſake of man, and he made man only to indulge his goodneſs in communicating happineſs to ſo noble a creature. GOD preſerves the world he has made. His providence preſides over all his works, animate and inanimate, and principally over men, thoſe rational beings whom he has created in his own image. But this providence is general, and, therefore, inſufficient to anſwer all the purpoſes of his goodneſs and his juſtice, in an immenſe variety of contingent events, and with regard to the merits and demerits of every man. It is eſſential, therefore, to theſe, and eſpecially to the laſt, that there ſhould be particular providences

videnses to take care of rational beings in every particular caſe which there are not, and to make a due diſtribution of good and evil among them conſtantly, becauſe any one inſtance to the contrary is inconſiſtent with God's moral attributes, and ſhakes the belief of his exiſtence. He governs, therefore, by particular providences, and provides by them for particular caſes that are not provided for in the adminiſtration of a general providence. Be it ſo. All you aſk is granted. Are you reconciled to the juſtice of God's government? Are you ſatisfied? By no means, reply theſe divines, and ſuch theiſts as Wollaston. Theſe particular providences are exerciſed ſo rarely, ſo ſecretly, or ſome how or other ſo ineffectually, that his government continues liable to the ſame charge of injuſtice, and cannot be reconciled to his attributes, and to the eternal reaſon of things, without the help of an hypotheſis, which it is but reaſonable we ſhould make to diſtinguiſh ourſelves from the atheiſtical tribe, and to juſtify that God, whom we accuſed in concert with them, whilſt our alliance laſted, and as far as the conditions of it extended.

After this, will it not be permitted me to ſay, that if theſe men do not blaſpheme directly, little leſs than blaſphemy, nay blaſphemy itſelf is deduced directly by their allies from, the principles they lay down? I will ſay this at leaſt, that they talk prophanely, and argue preſumptuouſly, in very devout and ſometimes in very modeſt terms. Will it not be permitted me to ſay, that theſe men ſeem to be in the kingdom of God, what the ringleaders of faction are in a ſtate? Men would be angels, and we ſee in Milton that angels would be gods. The pretenſions of men are exorbitant, yet all they demand is preſumed to be of right, and whatever falls ſhort of their demands to be a denial of a right founded in

the original inſtitution of his government by GOD; for of any original contract or covenant between him and man, except that which the Jews boaſt he made with their anceſtors, we never heard. Tho' divines talk ſometimes of a covenant, which they are pleaſed to call of grace. To finiſh this alluſion, let me add that when factions deviſe expedients to redreſs the grievances of which they complain, they are commonly ſuch as ſeem to redreſs, rather than redreſs, and as make the ſovereign little amends for all the violence they have offered to his prerogative, and for all they have ſaid and done againſt him.

LXIII.

IT is high time that we ſhould have recourſe to a better authority than that of man, to the authority of GOD himſelf; that we ſhould conſider how he has made us, and in what circumſtances he has placed us; that we ſhould declare what he has done to be agreeable to his infinite wiſdom, and to all his other perfections, becauſe he has done it; and that we ſhould prepare our minds to be grateful and reſigned. To lead us then into this track of thought, let it be obſerved that the phænomena of nature, the greateſt and the moſt minute, eſtabliſh the doctrine of final cauſes, and, therefore, the intelligence of the firſt cauſe, by innumerable proofs which are at all times obvious to our ſenſes. Many of theſe proofs amount to geometrical certainty; ſince a multitude of things, which might be made in manners and placed in poſitions almoſt infinite, are ſo made, ſo placed, ſo contrived that they are viſibly appropriated to the particular uſes to which they ſerve, and to no other. If the ſcheme of particular providences was ſupported by proofs like theſe, no

reaſonable man could doubt of the truth of it. But it is not ſo ſupported. The facts are often wholly uncertain, or mingled up with fabulous circumſtances, or diſtinguiſhed, without reaſon, from thoſe which happen under the direction of a general providence, by ſuperſtition and artifice, ſo that proofs of the falſity of particular providences are in proportion as frequent as thoſe of the reality of final cauſes. We are juſtified, therefore, in affirming one, and in not affirming the other, whilſt they who affirm both are juſtified by their proceeding in affirming neither. They affirm the doctrine of final cauſes often on proofs which the phænomena contradict, and which the doctrine eſtabliſhed independently of them does not want. They affirm that of particular providences without any proofs which the phænomena furniſh.

THE two aſſumed propoſitions I have mentioned ſo often, that man is the final cauſe of the world, and that the communication of happineſs to him is the final cauſe of his creation, are moſt certainly falſe, as the ſcheme of particular providences that force the laws of nature is no doubt, and as that may be which ſuppoſes theſe providences exerciſed in a manner agreeable to theſe laws. That the world is fitted in many reſpects to be the habitation of men, or that men are fitted for this habitation, is true. But will it follow, even from the firſt, that the world, therefore, was made for the ſake of man, any more than it will follow that it was made for any other ſpecies of animals, for of all whom, according to their ſeveral natures, it is equally well fitted, and for of all whom we may believe on this account, very reaſonably, that it was made as well as for us? It is as well fitted for BOWNCE as for you, with reſpect to phyſical nature, and with reſpect to moral nature, BOWNCE has little to do beyond hearkening to the ſtill whiſpers, the ſecret ſuggeſtions, and the ſudden influences of inſtinct.

ſtinct. In the works of men, the moſt complicated ſchemes produce, very hardly and very uncertainly, one ſingle effect. In the works of God, one ſingle ſcheme produces a multitude of different effects, and anſwers an immenſe variety of purpoſes. Whatever was the final cauſe of the world, whatever motive (for we muſt ſpeak after the manner of men) the firſt cauſe had to create it, which motive could not ariſe from any thing without himſelf, and muſt be, therefore, reſolved into his mere will; we conceive eaſily that infinite wiſdom which determined, and infinite power which executed the plan of the univerſe, had ſome ſecondary, ſome inferior regard in making this and every other planet, to all the creatures that were to inhabit them, tho' neither any of theſe creatures nor all of them were, in a proper ſenſe, the final cauſes for which theſe planets were created. When we look down on other animals, we diſcern a diſtance, but a very meaſurable diſtance between us and them. When we look up to our common Creator, the diſtance is immeaſurable, for it is infinite. In the firſt view, as we have ſome ſuperiority, we are ready to claim a preference due to us over them. But in the ſecond, and relatively to God, we can boaſt of no ſuch claim. As the diſtance is infinite from them, ſo it is from us, to him; for there are no degrees of more or leſs in infinite.

This reflection alone ſhould have kept philoſophers within the bounds of modeſty. But neither this reflection, nor a great many others, which inward conſciouſneſs and outward obſervation ſuggeſt, have been able to do it. No men have reaſoned ſo dogmatically about the divine nature and perfections, nor have ſuppoſed them ſo much on a level with human conceptions, as the philoſophers and divines who have talked the moſt, and the moſt inconſiſtently by conſequence, of their incomprehenſibility. Some of the heathens aſſerted the ſoul of

man to be a participation of the divinity, or an emanation from it. Chriſtians have been very little more modeſt. St. AUSTIN taught, that the ſoul of man is the higheſt of created beings, and that there is nothing ſuperior, except the Creator himſelf: and the philoſophers, we ſpeak of here, teach that GOD's manner of knowing, a ſecret as impenetrable as his manner of being, is the ſame as ours, that he knows by ideas, and that without them he could not have made, nor could govern what he has made*. The vanity of being rational, a title they aſcribe to GOD as well as to man, turns their heads. But what is their rationality? The firſt principles of all their knowledge are not common to GOD and them, but to them and to the beaſts of the field. The improvements they make, on the ſame principles, beyond their fellow-creatures, are owing to this, that they have better, and, perhaps, more intellectual faculties than the others, as the others have better, and, perhaps, more corporeal ſenſes than they have. The reaſon of this difference ſeems to be, that ſuch improvements in knowledge are neceſſary to the well-being of men, to their ſtation, and to their deſtination, as are not neceſſary to thoſe of other animals. This reaſon will appear, I think, true, if we conſider that as far as theſe improvements are neceſſary to the purpoſes I have mentioned, they are eaſy; the knowledge we acquire by them is real, and rationality is a perfection in our nature: whereas in proportion to the attempts we make to carry them beyond this point, they grow harder and harder, our knowledge grows leſs and leſs real, till it terminates in mere conjecture, or in manifeſt error, and this very rationality becomes an imperfection in our nature, or gives, as it gave to COTTA, a pretence to call it ſo.

* Vid. MALEB.

THIS

This might be illuſtrated by many examples, by that of religion particularly. Man is a religious as well as a ſocial creature, made to know and to adore his Creator, to diſcover and to obey his will, to conform himſelf, not to an imaginary abſtract reaſon of things, but to that reaſon which reſults from his own conſtitution, and from the conſtitution of the ſyſtem to which he belongs, whereby many things indifferent in themſelves and no way obligatory on other animals, ceaſe to be indifferent, and are obligatory on him. Thus far the principles of religion, and the duties of it are eaſy to be known; and if the one were known, and the other known and practiſed only thus far, it would have, in great meaſure at leaſt, it's genuine effect. But men have not been content with this knowledge. Artificial theology and ſuperſtition have perplexed the principles, and overloaded the duties of it, till it is grown unintelligible, and in many inſtances impracticable, or unfit to be practiſed.

Greater powers of reaſon, and means of knowledge have been meaſured out to us than to other animals, that we might be able to fulfil the ſuperior purpoſes of our deſtination, whereof religion is, no doubt, the chief. But they have been meaſured out to us thus far, and no further, whilſt in thoſe inferior purpoſes (for ſuch we ought to eſteem them) that regard animal life, other creatures have by nature the advantage over men. The elevation and pre-eminence of our ſpecies conſiſt in the former alone. But tho' they are great, they do not take us out of the claſs of animality; and the metaphyſician who fancies himſelf wrapped up in pure intellect, and even abſtracted from his material part, will feel hunger and thirſt, and roar out in a fit of the ſtone. I am far from thinking the condition of mankind as unhappy as the ſame writers, who

who maintain that the world was made for the ſake of man, and man merely to have happineſs communicated to him, repreſent it to be. But yet I am perſuaded, and ſo muſt every man be who is capable of reflection, that his condition would have been very different from what it is, if the hypotheſis of theſe men had been true. In ſhort, without regard to the exaggerations of the elder PLINY, who makes the human ſtate as deſpicable as he can, we ſhall find ſufficient reaſon to ſay, on our own obſervation of the progreſs of human life, and not of the beginnings of it only, how mad are men when they entertain ſuch high opinions of their own elevation, and think themſelves born to be proud! "Heu dementiam ab his initiis "exiſtimantium ad ſuperbiam ſe genitos*!

LXIV.

THO' GOD does not govern the world by particular providences, and tho' it ſeems to be contrary to what infinite wiſdom has eſtabliſhed that he ſhould, yet are we not, nor has mankind ever been without GOD, and the evident marks of his providence in the world. Look back, as far as hiſtory and tradition give you any light. Conſider the preſent courſe of things in the phyſical and moral ſyſtems. Which way ſoever you turn yourſelf, you will meet with GOD, "Deum "videbis occurrentem tibi†," and may ſay to the divine what the good man, whom SOCRATES mentions in his eccleſiaſtical hiſtory, ſaid to the philoſopher‡, my book is the nature of things, which is always at hand when I am deſirous to read the words of GOD: "meus liber, o philoſophe, eſt "natura rerum, quæ quidem præſto eſt quoties Dei verba le-

* PLIN. L. 7. † SEN. de Benef. ‡ L. 4.

"gere

"gere libuerit." What we read in that book is undoubtedly the word of God, and in that we ſhall find no foundation for a ſcheme, like this, of particular providences. We ſhall find that the courſe of things has been always the ſame; that national virtue and national vice have always produced national happineſs and national miſery in a due proportion, and are, by conſequence, the great ſanctions, as it is ſaid above, of the law of nature. We ſhall find that theſe ſanctions are ſufficient, in terrorem, to the collective bodies of men, and that the puniſhment of individuals is left to the diſcipline of thoſe laws which every ſociety makes for it's own ſake, and which are ſuggeſted by the law of nature, to prevent, by private puniſhments, the growth of public misfortunes. We ſhall find that he, who made, preſerves the world, and governs it on the ſame principles, and according to the ſame invariable laws which he impoſed at firſt. Invariable they are, no doubt: and that difference of events, which gives occaſion to the diſtinction of ordinary and extraordinary, is nothing more than the natural effect of them. Comets, nay eclipſes, were thought to be extraordinary apparitions that portended extraordinary events, till experience and obſervation made them familiar, and aſtronomers began to calculate their returns.

The laws we ſpeak of are ſo truly invariable, that the ſame face of nature and the ſame courſe of things have been preſerved from the firſt, in heaven and on earth, under the direction of the ſame general providence. The celeſtial bodies moved in the ſame order five or ten thouſand years ago that they move now. The inanimate parts of our globe, the vegetable and the animal world have been conſtituted, maintained, and propagated in the ſame manner; and whatever difference the moſt antient patriarchs, or the firſt of men, if they were to come into life again, might find in the works of art, they

they would find none in thoſe of nature: ſo that, when a great philoſopher ſays that ADAM would find a new world, he muſt be underſtood to mean that the firſt of men would find a great deal more of the old one diſcovered, as we ſay that COLUMBUS found a new world when he diſcovered America. Theſe laws, tho' they are invariable, are general too, and as ſuch they admit of much contingency. Matter, as we conceive it, is purely paſſive, can act no otherwiſe than it is acted upon according to the firſt impreſſions of motion that were given by the firſt mover, and is, therefore, leſs liable to contingency, becauſe more immediately, and more abſolutely under the influence of thoſe laws by which the motion of it, the firſt of ſecond cauſes, is continued. The firſt gleams of thought appear in our animal ſyſtem, and with them the powers of willing, and of beginning motion. Thought improves, and the exerciſe of theſe powers grows more frequent, and more conſiderable, as the ſyſtem riſes. As it riſes, therefore, there is, more room for contingency of events under the general and invariable laws impoſed on the whole kind, or on the particular ſpecies. But in no ſpecies is there ſo much room of this ſort as in the human. Other animals ſeem to act more agreeably to the laws, each of his own nature, and more uniformly than man, by that ſecret determination of the will which is knowable only by it's effects, like every other kind of force, which we call inſtinct, and which may anſwer in natural influences, to what the divines call grace in thoſe that they ſuppoſe to be ſupernatural. This influence, whatever it be, is, I think, more extenſive and more durable in other animals than in us. It ſerves them in more particulars, and ſeems to have the ſole direction of their conduct through life. It has, at leaſt, the principal direction, even in thoſe of them in whom we perceive ſome glimmerings of rationality, and ſome partial indications of a moral nature.

But now in man, inſtinct does no more than point out the firſt rudiments of the law of his nature. Reaſon does, or ſhould do the reſt. Reaſon, inſtructed by experience, ſhews the law, and the ſanctions of it, which are as invariable and as uniform as the law; for in all the ages of the world, and among all the ſocieties of men, the well-being or the ill-being of theſe ſocieties, and, therefore, of all mankind has borne a conſtant proportion to the obſervation or neglect of it. God has given to his human creatures the materials of phyſical and moral happineſs, if I may ſay ſo, in the phyſical and moral conſtitution of things. He has given them faculties, and powers neceſſary to collect and apply theſe materials, and to carry on the work, of which reaſon is the architect, as far as theſe materials, theſe faculties, theſe powers, and the ſkill of this architect admit. This the Creator has done for us. What we ſhall do for ourſelves he has left to the freedom of our elections; for free-will ſeems ſo eſſential to rational beings, that I preſume we cannot conceive any ſuch to be without it, tho' we eaſily conceive them reſtrained in the execution of what they will. This plan is that of divine wiſdom; and whatever our imaginations may ſuggeſt, we know nothing more particular, and, indeed, nothing at all more of the conſtitution and order of the human ſyſtem, nor of the diſpenſations of providence, than this.

Agreeably to this plan, men have been every where intent to procure to themſelves all the phyſical comforts of life, and ſolicitous to defend themſelves againſt all the phyſical evils. In the firſt, they have ſucceeded every where ſo well that they enjoy, not only the neceſſaries and comforts, but the luxuries of life; for there is the luxury of Scythians as well as of Sybarites, of Americans as well as of Europeans, and of the cottage

cottage as well as of the palace. In the ſecond, as in the firſt, and in every human invention and inſtitution, there is ſomething that is imperfect, ſomething that falls ſhort of the end that we propoſe, by defect of knowledge, or by defect of power. But even in this, the ſucceſs of mankind has been great; ſince they have found means univerſally, even the moſt ſavage have found them, to prevent or to cure many of thoſe phyſical evils to which they ſtand expoſed, and to alleviate thoſe which they can neither prevent nor cure. This has been done variouſly and by ſlow degrees, but it has been always doing, and diſtempers were cured and many phyſical evils averted before the great improvements of experimental philoſophy were made. They are ſo, even now, in countries where theſe improvements were never heard of.

AGREEABLY to the ſame plan, moral good has been promoted, moral evil has been reſtrained, and the general ſtate of mankind has been greatly improved in this reſpect, as well as in the other; tho' in this reſpect many more and more frequent contingencies are to be guarded againſt than in the other, becauſe they ariſe in the moral ſyſtem from the moſt uncertain principle imaginable, the free-will of man: and in the other they are ſuch alone as certain laws and an eſtabliſhed order of things admit. Phyſical contingencies are rather apparent than real. But moral contingencies are very real, and yet they are guarded againſt ſo well, and the principles and practice of morality are ſo well maintained in the ſeveral ſocieties of men that they produce no great diſorders in theſe, and there are on the whole vaſtly more innocent than guilty perſons.

LXV.

I AM not unacquainted with the various refinements of ingenious men, about the freedom of the human will. Some of them have aſſumed it to be a freedom from external compulſion only, and not from internal neceſſity. Others have aſſumed it to be a freedom from both; and there are thoſe who aſſign not only freedom to the will, but a natural indifference, which is not excited to chuſe, becauſe an object is agreeable antecedently to the choice, but chuſes for the pleaſure it finds in chuſing, and makes the object agreeable by this choice *. The firſt ſeem to me to leave neither contingency, nor virtue, nor vice in the world. They eſtabliſh an univerſal neceſſity, of one ſort at leaſt. The laſt ſeem to me to transfer in ſome ſort to man, what belongs to GOD. There is an agent, no doubt, who makes things good and agreeable by chuſing them, and who is not determined to his choice ab extra, by any pre-exiſtent goodneſs in objects. But this agent is not that paſſive creature man, who acts, when he does act, according to the contingent impreſſions of outward objects on him, or according to thoſe remote objects which his imagination repreſents to him; for in this ſcene alone, and a large one it is, free-will does, and I ſuppoſe can, exerciſe itſelf. The ſecond opinion is ſo evidently true, that I cannot conceive it would have been liable to any contradiction; if philoſophers had not done in this caſe, what they do in many, if they had not rendered what is clear, obſcure by explanations, and what is certain, problematical by engraftments.

INTO theſe ſubtil and perplexed diſquiſitions I have no deſign to enter with them. I write to you, and for you; and

* Vid. KING de Orig. Mali.

you

you would think yourſelf little obliged to me, if I took the pains of explaining in proſe, what you would not think it neceſſary to explain in verſe, and in the character of a poetical philoſopher, who may dwell in generalities. But beſides this, I have another reaſon, which would weigh with me on every other as well as on this occaſion. I fear to go out of my depth, in ſounding imaginary fords that are real gulphs, and wherein many of the talleſt philoſophers have been drowned, whilſt none of them ever got over to the ſcience they had in view. Here even LOCKE, that cautious philoſopher, was loſt; and here they who have followed and refuted him, like thoſe who went before them all, have ſucceeded no better: ſo true is that ſaying of MONTAGNE, when men attempt to carry knowledge far, "tout finit dans l'éblouiſſement," the ſight is dazzled, and nothing is ſeen clearly.

INSTEAD of conſulting theſe writers, therefore, let us conſult ourſelves. Let us at leaſt attend to them no further, than our inward reflection and our intuitive knowledge confirm their opinions. The material world is an immenſe ſcene. Numbers of men, and numbers of ages have been employed to acquire knowledge; and, where this has fallen ſhort, to make hypotheſes, ſometimes uſeful, concerning the conſtitution of it, and the laws according to which bodies act on bodies, in order to apply them to the ſervice of mankind. No man's experience can inſtruct him ſufficiently in this ſcience, even for the moſt ordinary uſes of life. Every one muſt lean on that of others, the illiterate univerſally, and the moſt learned in many parts; ſince no one of them is able to embrace and cultivate alike the whole. But knowledge of the intellectual world is more confined as to the principles of it, and, therefore, leſs confined as to the perſons equally capable of acquiring all the real knowledge that is to be acquired about it. I

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ſay, real knowledge; becauſe hypotheſes, which are often admitted very reaſonably and very uſefully in one caſe, have no pretence to be admitted in the other. Phyſical hypotheſes, which go beyond knowledge, but are founded on it, may be admitted, not only becauſe we muſt accept probability for certainty on many occaſions always, but becauſe when we accept it in theſe caſes, we accept it, as it were, pro interim. None of the phænomena ſtand in oppoſition to the preſent probability, and they all lie open to future diſcoveries; ſo that by the ſame means, by which we attain to this probability, we may attain hereafter to certainty, and, in the mean time, the former can be convicted of no error. The hypotheſes of metaphyſicians are very different from theſe. They are often framed in direct contradiction to the phænomena: and if they are ſo once, they muſt be ſo always; for the phænomena are, in this caſe, always the ſame, no new ones ariſe, and there are no means of further diſcoveries. The phænomena of our intellectual ſyſtem lie in a narrow compaſs, for the whole ſyſtem is within us, and we have but to turn our eyes inward to have intuitive knowledge of it. Moral philoſophers may draw different corollaries from the known operations of the mind, determinations of the will, and motives of human actions: but nothing can be more futile than the attempts of metaphyſicians, to ſhew, by tedious abſtract reaſoning, what the internal phænomena in themſelves are, inſtead of appealing to our intuitive conſcious knowledge of them. They would not be a jot more ridiculous, if they attempted to demonſtrate, moſt philoſophically, to a man whoſe eyes are open, what thoſe objects are which he ſees or may ſee, at a due diſtance, and through a proper medium.

I have ſaid ſomething here and there in theſe minutes, already, concerning the principles of our moral ſyſtem, in order to

to ſhew how it may be and how it has been improved, and to juſtify the providence of GOD on this head, as well as on that of our phyſical ſyſtem. In this place, let it be obſerved to the ſame purpoſe again, that, altho' the human will be free from external compulſion and internal neceſſity, yet it is liable to be determined often by ſenſible and intellectual affections; for I ſhall not make the diſtinction SENECA makes, between affections and the principia præludentia affectibus I am conſcious that this is ſo, for I am conſcious that I have determined too often, in compliance with my appetite, and in favor of pleaſure, regardleſs of happineſs, not only againſt my reaſon in general, but againſt the immediate, the inſtantaneous act of my underſtanding: as I am likewiſe conſcious that I have determined ſometimes, and I wiſh I had done ſo much oftener, in compliance with my reaſon, and in favor of happineſs, not only againſt my appetite, but againſt my appetite excited by an immediate object. I am not more certain that I exiſt, than I am that all this is true: and ſince it is true of me, I conclude that it is ſo, in ſome degree or other, of all mankind. Now, amidſt the contingencies that muſt ariſe from this conſtitution of every individual in the complicated affairs of his life, and in that diverſity of relations in which he ſtands, I need not go about to prove, that the odds will be always on the ſide of appetite, from which affections ariſe, as affections grow up afterwards into paſſions, which reaſon cannot quite ſubdue in the ſtrongeſt minds, and by which ſhe is perpetually ſubdued in the weakeſt. Had the all-wiſe Creator implanted in every man a moral ſenſe, which may be acquired in ſome ſort by long habits of virtue, and the warmth of true philoſophical devotion, but which it is whimſical to aſſume to be natural; had he done more, had he determined men to the practice of virtue, as he has to the preſervation of their beings, by irreſiſtible inſtinct; or had he appointed particular provi-

dences for particular men, to make them good and to reward them for being ſo; there would have been in the freedom of human will no chance for immorality, or rather this freedom would have been taken from us in all occurrences of a moral nature by the internal neceſſity of ſuch an inſtinct, or the external compulſion of ſuch providences. But no one of theſe methods, which ſelf-ſufficient philoſophers have thought it neceſſary that God ſhould take to ſecure the moral happineſs of mankind, by ſecuring in all events the morality of individuals, has appeared neceſſary to the purpoſes of divine wiſdom. It is plain by the whole courſe of God's providence, that he regards his human creatures collectively, not individually, how worthy ſoever every one of them deems himſelf to be a particular object of the divine care. He has given them indifferently, and in common, the means of arriving at happineſs in their moral, as in their phyſical ſtate; and has left it to them to improve theſe means, that they may obtain this end.

In this reſpect he has dealed with them alike in both. But the progreſs of theſe improvements is very different. It goes from individuals to collective bodies in one caſe, and from collective bodies to individuals in the other. Particular men have made diſcoveries, and invented arts beneficial to the whole ſpecies. The generality has adopted them. Their immediate utility has maintained them in practice, and appetite and reaſon have conſpired to ſet the undivided force of ſelf-love on their ſide. But our improvements in morality have always had, and muſt always have a very different progreſs. Some few particular men may diſcover, explain, and preſs upon others, by advice and example, the moral obligations that are incumbent on all. This alone will have little effect, and our moral ſtate will be little improved by it. This improvement, therefore, in themſelves and in others is not

 truſted

truſted to the reaſon of particular men. It is a principal object of the univerſal reaſon of mankind. For this purpoſe governments have been inſtituted, laws have been made, cuſtoms have been eſtabliſhed, children have been trained up to morality by education, and men have been deterred from immorality by various puniſhments, which human juſtice inflicts. When theſe means are employed effectually in any ſociety of men, the moral ſtate of that ſociety is happy. When they are employed ineffectually, which muſt be always the fault of thoſe to whom government is committed, the ſtate of that ſociety is miſerable. Individuals are the objects of human juſtice: ſocieties of men, of divine juſtice. When the former is not exerciſed effectually, the latter is; and no phyſical cauſes produce their effects more naturally, nor more ſurely, than general depravity produces general miſery.

LXVI.

SUCH is the conſtitution of things, and ſuch the divine œconomy in the government of mankind. God has given us the deſire of happineſs and the means of attaining to it. He has given us faculties ſufficient to diſcover, and to improve, theſe means. What could we aſk more of a beneficent Creator? Let us adore his goodneſs, and his juſtice (if we will aſcribe our ideas of moral attributes to him) as well as his wiſdom, and his power. Let us give him thanks for beſtowing exiſtence upon us, in the ſyſtem to which we belong; whilſt prophane antitheiſtical writers refuſe to own, that he himſelf exiſts, unleſs there be another. Our ſtate, in this world, is a ſtate not of pure, but of mixed, happineſs. As we are material beings, we are ſubject to generation and corruption, and to many phyſical evils that ariſe neceſſarily from this conſti-

tution. As we are intellectual beings, but endowed with very imperfect intelligence, we are liable to much error, and to many moral evils, that arise from hence, and that we bring on one another. If this were our case, without any thing more, the human state would be very deplorable indeed: and that it is our case we should be induced to think, if we gave credit to the partial representations of divines and atheists; one of whom defame, and the other deny, the Supreme Being. But our own experience, our own reflections, and, above all, the excellent writings of those who apply natural philosophy to confirm and improve natural religion, will lead us to God, by sensible demonstrations, much more strongly, than the others can lead us from him by metaphysical jargon, and theological declamation. In short, however mixed, and however moderate the general happiness of mankind may be, it is real, animal happiness: and he who affirms absolute non-existence preferable to existence in such a state as ours, like the persons PLINY alledges *, "qui non nasci optimum censerent aut "quam ocyssimè aboleri," scarcely deserves an answer. Let philosophers carry on this dispute as long as they please, it must always terminate in a question not hard to resolve; "whether it was most agreeable to the wisdom of the Creator, "to make the world and man as they are made; or to make "the former a wheel unfit to roll in it's place, in the great "machine of the universe, and the latter a creature so supe-"rior to his actual rank in the scale of intelligent beings, that "this rank must have been void, and the scale imperfect?"

THAT there are other material intelligent creatures, inhabitants of other planets, we have great reason to believe, and none to doubt. As they may be superior to us in their na-

* Nat. Hist. L. 7.

ture

ture and objects, in their ſeveral degrees leſs unworthy of the divine munificence, ſo their happineſs may be greater than ours. Yet theſe creatures, even the nobleſt of them, muſt be liable to ſome inconveniencies at leaſt, both phyſical and moral. Angels and glorified ſaints, who are ſaid to live with GOD, and, therefore, above the reach of thoſe effects of matter and motion which are felt in other ſyſtems, can be alone exempt from the firſt: and whether theſe beings, who are finite ſtill however glorified, can be exempt from the latter, theology muſt determine; it is not an object of common ſenſe. Nay, theology has already determined it, in the caſe of thoſe angels and archangels, who were driven from heaven for their ambition and rebellion againſt GOD. Some divines there are, who aſſume that the expulſion of theſe ſuperior beings made room for men; that the earth is a nurſery for heaven; to which the elect, a competent number of whom will be completed before the end of the world, are to be admitted: and that as creatures of a lower claſs are encouraged to better their condition by a right uſe of their faculties, according to this œconomy, ſo thoſe of an higher, the higheſt of created beings, are deterred from the abuſe of theirs. They may abuſe theſe faculties then: and there may be moral evil, even in heaven *. But however all this may be, ſince infinite wiſdom deſigned that there ſhould be various orders of intellectual beings in the plan of the univerſe, differently placed, differently conſtituted, and ſome ſuperior to others; it will follow, that nothing can be more abſurd than the complaints of creatures who are in one of theſe orders, that they are not in another, if, in truth, there are any creatures, except men, unreaſonable enough to make ſuch complaints. They complain of their own conſtitution, and of the conſtitution of the ſyſtem wherein they are placed,

* Vid. Notes to the Treat. de Orig. Mali. C. 5. Sec. 5.

as loudly as if the Supreme Being was obliged in juſtice to give them their choice, in ſome inconceivable manner, how and where they would exiſt, before he made them to exiſt. They complain of the uniform conduct of that general providence which is over all his works, as if his juſtice, repugnant, in this caſe, to his wiſdom, required that he ſhould govern creatures, whom he brought into exiſtence that they might compoſe a diſtinct order, and complete the ſcale of intellectual being, in a manner that would confound the ſeveral orders, and interrupt the ſcale. Some have condemned the creation, ſome the government of the world, and ſome both. The diſcoveries made, and every day making, in natural philoſophy, have ſhewn ſo many things which were thought uſeleſs, or hurtful, to be neceſſary, or beneficial, that a man who ſhould talk like LUCRETIUS, and others, about the phyſical world, would be at this time ridiculous. But he who talks as extravagantly as COTTA, and many others, about the moral world, is ſtill ſure to be heard with attention.

THAT creatures ſhould cenſure their Creator, in the government of the world he has made and preſerves, would appear ſurpriſing and ſhocking, if men had not been familiarized with this language. But how ſhould they not be familiarized with it, when the preachers of natural and revealed religion have been the loudeſt in holding it, tho' not the firſt indeed, for they have done nothing more than repeat what all the atheiſts, from DEMOCRITUS and EPICURUS, have ſaid? Like them, they have inſiſted much on what they aſſume that GOD ſhould have done, and has not done, to promote and ſecure the happineſs of his human creatures; whilſt they have paſſed over lightly what he has been pleaſed to do, for both theſe purpoſes. I might undertake to prove that TITUS and TRAJAN were tyrants of the Roman empire as well as NERO, by the

the ſame method whereby they attempt to prove that the Supreme Being is the tyrant of the world he governs. They have puſhed ſuch arguments on this ſubject, and they have puſhed them ſo far, that the whole tribe of theſe writers, like WOLLASTON and CLARKE whom I have mentioned, do in effect renounce the GOD whom you and I adore, as much as the rankeſt of the atheiſtical tribe. Your prieſts, and our parſons, will exclaim moſt pathetically, and rail outrageouſly, at this aſſertion; but have a little patience, and I will prove it, to their ſhame, to be true.

THAT there is room for much contingency in the phyſical and moral world, under the direction of a general providence, has been ſaid already; and that, amidſt theſe contingencies, happineſs, outward happineſs at leaſt, may fall to the lot of wicked, and outward unhappineſs to that of good men. But then, this general propoſition is of very uncertain application, too uncertain, by far, to be made a rule by which to judge of the diſpenſations of providence. There is, generally ſpeaking, leſs immorality, and leſs morality, worthy to draw down interpoſitions of divine vengeance or favor, and more innocence, perhaps, in the world, than is commonly apprehended. But however this be, divines, above all men, have the leaſt reaſon to inſiſt on the objection, taken from the aſſumed unhappineſs of good men, ſince they cannot do ſo without manifeſt inconſiſtency. That innocent children ſhould be puniſhed to the third and fourth generation, for the ſins of their guilty fathers, nay that the whole race of mankind ſhould be puniſhed for the ſin of one man, they hold agreeable to the juſtice of GOD; becauſe they believe on the faith of the ſcriptures, that he has proceeded, and proceeds, in this manner, with mankind. But that men, apparently innocent, ſhould be expoſed to any ſort of evil, they hold repugnant to his juſtice; altho' they

they affirm on their knowledge, not their belief, that his providence ſuffers this to happen in the courſe of human affairs.

Divines are not only thus inconſiſtent, they have on another account, and, as preachers of chriſtianity, a worſe grace than any men whatever to cry out ſo loudly againſt the evil that happens ſometimes to good men. They aſſert, that the law of grace is much more perfect than the law of nature, and that revelation inſpires much more ſublime notions of the deity, and of piety towards him, than reaſon. But how has it come to paſs, then, that heathen theiſts defended the divine providence againſt atheiſts who attacked it, and recommended a chearful reſignation to all the diſpenſations of it; whereas chriſtian divines have made a common cauſe with atheiſts to attack this providence, and to murmur againſt the neceſſary ſubmiſſion that they pay? Admirable precepts, and illuſtrious examples, of the firſt kind, may be quoted from paganiſm. I will mention the firſt that occurs to me. Seneca, who pleaded the cauſe of God againſt atheiſts, as I plead it actually againſt divines, heard the philoſopher Demetrius break out in his ſufferings into this rapturous expreſſion: "Immortal gods, I have but one complaint to make: why "was your will no ſooner communicated to me? Had I "known it ſooner, I would have run to meet what I am "now called to ſuffer." The paſſage is ſo very fine, that it deſerves a place not in the margin, but in the text, and to be cited in the original. "Hoc unum dii immortales "de vobis queri poſſum, quod non ante mihi voluntatem veſtram notam feciſtis; prior enim ad iſta veniſſem, ad "quæ nunc vocatus adſum." Few can arrive at this pious fortitude of mind, but we ſhould all endeavor it: and the chriſtian, who goes murmuring and complaining through this

life againſt the juſtice of God, deſerves little to taſte of his goodneſs in any other ſtate.

Heathen, as well as chriſtian, philoſophers, who believed that all things were made for the ſake of man, found it hard to reconcile the phænomena to this hypotheſis: and, unleſs they could do ſo, they found themſelves embarraſſed with this hypotheſis, in maintaining the exiſtence of an all-wiſe and all-powerful Being, againſt the cavils of atheiſts. The former, however, did their utmoſt, both on the ſuppoſition of a general providence, and of particular providences, to anſwer all theſe cavils. They did it too, not only plauſibly, but ſtrongly, in many inſtances, and would ſuffer, in no caſe, the hypotheſis of a future ſtate, if they did at all admit any ſuch, to unravel the demonſtration they had made. The hypotheſis might be true: they knew that the demonſtration was ſo. The hypotheſis might be true in part only, and relatively to ſome of the phænomena: they knew that the demonſtration was true in the whole, and that the infinite wiſdom and power of God were manifeſt alike in all the phænomena. They might have had an entire recourſe to this hypotheſis, if they had pleaſed; for it had been invented early in Ægypt, and elſewhere; and have attempted to untye, by one, the knot they had tied by another, as chriſtian divines have done ſince. But this doctrine was never firmly enough eſtabliſhed in the philoſophical, whatever it was in the vulgar, creed; and beſides, they might think it inſufficient for their purpoſe in any of the various manners wherein it was taught.

The conduct of chriſtian philoſophers has been very different from this. Far from defending the providence of God, they have joined in the clamor againſt it. They have brought him to the bar of humanity: and the ſelf-exiſtent Being, the firſt

firſt Cauſe of all things that are, the Creator, the Preſerver, the Governor of the univerſe, in whom we live, and move, and have our beings, has been tried, convicted, and condemned, for his government of the world, on the general principles of human juſtice; like the governor of a province, or any other inferior magiſtrate. Nothing has hindered, even thoſe who pretend to be his meſſengers, his ambaſſadors, his plenipotentiaries, from renouncing their allegiance to him, as they themſelves have the front to avow, but the hypotheſis of another ſtate; wherein it is ſuppoſed that he will vindicate his juſtice, and make amends for whatever is irregular, and unjuſt, in this, by puniſhments and rewards in that. On this hypotheſis alone they inſiſt: and therefore, if this will not ſerve their turn, God is diſowned by them, as effectually as if he was ſo in terms.

Heathen legiſlators might have reaſon to add the terrors of another life to thoſe of the judgments of God, and of the laws of man, in this. Heathen prieſts might have reaſon to ſupport theſe opinions by the authority of their pretended revelations, and by the myſterious rites of religion. But what reaſon could theiſts have, at any time, to paſs condemnation on the whole ſcheme of God's providence as it is exerciſed in this world, in order to confirm an opinion, by reaſon, that muſt ſtand on the bottom of revelation, or on none? On this bottom it would ſpread, and prevail as far, and as much, as the revelation itſelf. We ſee that it does ſo both in chriſtianiſm and in mahometaniſm. On this bottom it would do ſome good moſt certainly, and it could do no hurt. The miſchief lies in the way of proof. Reaſon eſtabliſhes the belief of an all-perfect Being. Revelation ſuppoſes it. If we impute any imperfection to this Being, we ſhake the belief of him. The imputation implies contradiction, and reaſon is ſet in oppoſition to reaſon. But, on the other hand, ſome things may be admitted piouſly, on the faith

of a revelation, concerning which we can ſcarce attempt to reaſon without impiety. Thus we may believe that men are to live again in another ſtate, and that they will be dealed with there, even with ſome regard to the uſe they have made of their free-will here. But to enforce this hypotheſis by any attempts to prove that the diſpenſations of providence here are unjuſt, or to advance any thing concerning the aſſumed future ſtate, which cannot be reconciled to the divine perfections, is impious and abſurd. It is impious and abſurd, therefore, to reſt the demonſtrated exiſtence of an all-perfect Being on an hypotheſis that imputes real injuſtice to him hereafter, as an expedient to ſcreen him from the imputation of imaginary injuſtice here: and the divines, who do this, if they are not atheiſts, which it is reaſonable as well as charitable to believe that none of them are, muſt be eſteemed abettors at leaſt of atheiſm, by every man who examines impartially their whole proceeding.

LXVII.

METAPHYSICAL writers counſel us ſometimes very gravely to ſilence imagination, that we may attend to experience, and hearken to the voice of reaſon. The advice is good, and they would neither puzzle themſelves, nor perplex knowledge, if they took it as they give it. But who can forbear ſmiling, when theſe very men abandon themſelves, at the ſame inſtant, to all the ſeductions and to all the tranſports of their own imaginations? No men do ſo more than theſe, not even the perſons of your own tribe: and, as many of their writings, from thoſe of PLATO down to ſome that are very modern, might paſs more juſtly for poems than for philoſophical treatiſes, ſo was I not in the wrong when I adviſed

you to ſuppoſe rather that BARNEVELT or SCRIBLERUS had proved your rape of the lock to be philoſophical, than to ſuppoſe they had proved it to be a political poem. Theſe philoſophers are ſo afraid of ignorance, that they expoſe themſelves to error, which is worſe. What they imagine preſumptuouſly may be, they paſs dogmatically for that which is, in matters of the firſt philoſophy above all. You carry on your poetical ſyſtems per ambages deorumque miniſteria: and, for this purpoſe, no other being can be ſo like to man as a poetical god, nor any intricacies of your marvellous ſo great as thoſe of imaginary abſtractions, imaginary analogies, and deluſive ſounds, which theſe men employ to carry on theirs. It is hard very often to diſcover their meaning, or even whether they have any meaning or no: and when we examine cloſely what is intelligible in their writings, we find it ſometimes hard, and ſometimes impoſſible, to reconcile clearly and conſiſtently many things that they advance in maintenance of the ſame ſyſtem, and in a ſuppoſed conformity to it.

THIS world is called, by ſome, the porch or entrance into another. We go from the porch into the houſe by death; for death does not deſtroy that ſoul, that ſelf which is the living agent. It deſtroys, indeed, the groſs material body, or, to ſpeak in the familiar ſublime of SOCRATES, the ſoul wears out her ſuit of cloathes *. Nay, ſhe was ſaid to wear out ſo many, in different ſtates, both before and after this, that there was ſome apprehenſion taken leſt ſhe ſhould wear out herſelf at laſt. They who aſſert a future as well as the preſent life connect the two, in ſome of their diſcourſes, ſo intimately together, that they aſſume the moral government of GOD, which begins in one, to be carried on more perfectly and to be complete in

* Vid. PHÆD. in PLATO.

the

the other. Thus virtue has a ſufficient ſphere of action, and all the conſequences of it have time to follow. Good men may all unite with one another, and with other orders of virtuous creatures, and form one bleſſed ſociety in a future ſtate: nay, this happy effect of virtue, in diſtant ſcenes and periods, may have a tendency to amend thoſe vicious creatures, throughout the univerſal kingdom of God, who are capable of amendment *. They who expreſs themſelves in this manner, who think that virtue is militant here, and may be and is often overborne, but that it may combat with greater advantage hereafter, and prevail completely, and enjoy it's conſequent rewards in ſome future ſtate, tho' they think the preſent a ſtate of probation and trial, cannot think it to be ſuch finally. But the language of divines, in general, is different. Tho' they are not quite agreed about the eternity of torments in hell, yet they are agreed that our ſtate of probation ends with this life; that however we are diſpoſed of from the hour of death to the day of judgment, that judgment will be determined by what we have done in this ſtate; and that the exact diſtribution of rewards and puniſhments then made, will, and alone can, ſet the preſent diſorders and inequalities right, and juſtify on the whole that ſcheme of providence †, which appears in the ſmall portion of it that we ſee ſo inexplicable, ſo confuſed and ſo unworthy of infinite wiſdom, juſtice and goodneſs.

The firſt of theſe theological hypotheſes, for ſuch they are to reaſon, independently of revelation, one as much as the other, may be received. Far from accuſing directly, and excuſing indirectly the providence of God, it does not ſo much as imply any thing repugnant to the perfections of the divine

* Vid. Anal. of Relig. P. 1. C. 3. † Vid. Clarke's Evid. Prop. 4.

nature. I do not preſume to ſay, that theſe perfections require it ſhould be true, nor that my underſtanding is able fully to comprehend it. But ſince I may believe it true, tho' I cannot believe the latter to be ſo without contradicting the fundamental principles of theiſm, I embrace with joy the pleaſing expectations it raiſes in my mind. The antient and modern epicureans provoke my indignation, when they boaſt, as a mighty acquiſition, their pretended certainty that the body and the ſoul die together *. If they had this certainty then, would the diſcovery be ſo very comfortable? When I conſult my reaſon, I am ready to aſk theſe men, as TULLY aſked their predeceſſors, where that old doating woman is who trembles at the acherontia templa, the alta orci, and all the infernal hobgoblins, furies with their ſnakes and whips, devils with their cloven feet and lighted torches? Was there need of ſo much philoſophy to keep theſe mighty genii from living under the ſame terrors? I would aſk further, is the middle between atheiſm and ſuperſtition ſo hard to find? Or may not theſe men ſerve as examples to prove what PLUTARCH affirms, "that "ſuperſtition leads to atheiſm?" For me, who am no philoſopher, nor preſume to walk out of the high road of plain common ſenſe †, but content myſelf to be governed by the dictates of nature, and am, therefore, in no danger of becoming atheiſtical, ſuperſtitious, or ſceptical, I ſhould have no difficulty which to chuſe, if the option was propoſed to me, to exiſt after death, or to die whole, as it has been called. Be there two worlds, or be there twenty, the ſame GOD is the GOD of all, and wherever we are, we are equally in his power. Far from fearing my Creator, that all-perfect Being whom I adore, I ſhould fear to be no longer his creature.

* Se, cum tempus mortis veniſſet, totos eſſe perituros.

† Introd. to Princ. [illegible] know.

LXVIII.

LXVIII.

HAVING ſaid thus much to ſhew why the firſt of theſe hypotheſes, which I am willing to admit, may be true, tho' it has no foundation in ſcripture or reaſon, and is purely imaginary, it remains that I ſhew more at large why the laſt, which I reject on principles of reaſon, muſt be on thoſe principles neceſſarily falſe. When divines abandon the ſtrong holds of revelation, wherein they are, or ſhould be, made ſecure, they have no right to expect ſubmiſſion out of their province; and they muſt be content, when they reaſon prophanely or abſurdly, to be ſent back to revelation. It is prophane even to inſinuate, and much more to affirm peremptorily, that the proceedings of GOD towards man in the preſent life are unjuſt: and if that could be admitted, it would be abſurd to admit that this may be ſet right; which means, if the words have any meaning, that this injuſtice muſt ceaſe to be injuſtice, on the received hypotheſis of his proceedings towards man in another life. One is prophane, notwithſtanding all the queſtions they beg to ſupport the charge. The other is abſurd, on the very principles on which they argue, and according to our cleareſt and moſt diſtinct ideas or notions of human juſtice.

THAT a due proportion of reward and puniſhment, that reparation and terror are objects eſſential to the conſtitution of human juſtice, will not be denied. That which falls ſhort of theſe is partial. That which goes beyond them cruel. Men are liable to err on both ſides. GOD on neither. Men may have, therefore, amends to make; GOD never can: and when we ſay amends have been made, we imply, that injuſtice has

has been committed. Now, as abſurd as it appears to ſay this, when we ſpeak of the proceedings of God towards good men in the other life, we muſt ſay it, for we have nothing elſe to ſay, if we aſſume that he has dealed unjuſtly by them in this life; ſince it is beyond omnipotence to cauſe that which has been done not to have been done. The happy ſtate of good men in heaven, according to this bold hypotheſis, is not ſo much the reward of the virtue they practiſed on earth, as an act of God's juſtice againſt himſelf, as it were, an act, in ſhort, by which he makes them reparation, and an ample one it is, for the injuſtice he did them here. The miſerable ſtate of wicked men in hell is an exerciſe of juſtice delayed, but exerciſed ſo ſeverely at laſt, that it would exceed vaſtly all the neceſſary degrees of terror, if any of theſe creatures remained after it in an undetermined condition wherein terror might have it's effect.

Tho' reparation and terror are the eſſential objects of juſtice in the puniſhment of crimes, yet it is not ſufficient that they be made ſo in general only. Juſtice requires that puniſhments, and we muſt ſay the ſame of rewards, the two ſanctions of all laws, be meaſured out in various degrees and manners, according to the various circumſtances of particular caſes, and in a due proportion to them. Such is the procedure of providence in the moral government of the world; for tho' particular interpoſitions to reward or puniſh particular men, if there are any, are too rare and too conjectural to paſs for rules and meaſures of his government, and tho' it be apparent that the immediate regard of providence is directed to men collectively, not individually, yet the divine wiſdom has provided means to puniſh individuals, by directing men to form ſocieties, and to eſtabliſh laws, in the execution of which civil magiſtrates are in ſome ſort the vicegerents of

providence. To them distributive justice is committed, and when this fails to have it's effect, when the immorality of individuals becomes that of an whole society, then the judgments of GOD follow: and as men are regarded collectively, they are punished collectively in the order of a general providence. This is evidently the œconomy of GOD's government of mankind in this life. That which it is assumed will take place hereafter, and according to which he will proceed eternally in another life, is the very reverse of this. Every individual human creature is to be tried by the son of GOD, that is by GOD himself, at the great day, in the valley of JEHOSAPHAT. The criminal, who has been justified here, will be condemned there. The innocent man, who has been condemned here, will be justified there. The most secret actions, nay the thoughts of every heart, will be laid open, and sentence will be pronounced accordingly. What now does that justice require, if it may be called justice, when it tends neither to reparation nor terror, on the principles of which we argue? It requires most certainly that rewards and punishments should be measured out in every particular case, in proportion to the merit and demerit of each individual. But instead of this, it is assumed, conformably to the christian revelation and to the doctrine of PLATO, that the righteous are set on the right hand of the judge, and the wicked on the left, from whence they are transported to heaven, or plunged into hell. They are tried individually, they seem to be rewarded or punished collectively, without any distinction of the particular cases which have been so solemnly determined, and without any proportion observed between the various degrees of merit and demerit, of innocence and of guilt, in the application of these rewards and punishments.

I ask

I aſk the men who maintain that juſtice is the ſame in God as it is in our ideas of it, and who preſume on theſe ideas to cenſure the divine providence, when they ſee ſuch as they eſteem good involved ſometimes in public calamities with ſuch as they eſteem wicked, whether this be a jot more repugnant to their ideas of juſtice, and of the moral fitneſs of things, whereon they inſiſt ſo much, than it is to reward the greateſt and the leaſt degree of virtue, and to puniſh the greateſt and the leaſt degree of vice, alike? The particular rules of juſtice conſiſt in the diſtinction and proportion that have been mentioned; and unleſs they are preſerved, the general rules muſt be of courſe perverted. I aſk what theſe perſons would ſay, if they beheld a man, who had done ſome trifling good to ſociety, recompenced like one who had ſaved his country; or if they, who were convicted of petty larceny, ſhould be delivered over to the hangman, at one of our ſeſſions, with thoſe who had been found guilty of aſſaſſination and robbery? It may be ſaid of eternal torments in hell, that they have been made known to us by revelation, that there are, no doubt, ſufficient reaſons for them, which we are as unable to diſcover as we were to diſcover that there would be any ſuch torments; but that theſe reaſons not having been revealed, it is in vain to enquire about them, or about the various degrees of beatitude and of miſery, wherewith good men may be rewarded, and ill men puniſhed in another life. Now this anſwer is certainly concluſive on the hypotheſis of a revelation, and being ſo, it ſhould have hindered thoſe divines, who maintain this eternity, from attempting it on arbitrary ſuppoſitions, and on ſuch frivolous reaſonings as are not only unworthy of infinite wiſdom, but even of common ſenſe in a very low degree, what reputation ſoever the authors of them have had in theology. How comes it to paſs now, that the

firſt

firſt of theſe divines account for an eternity of torments, and would, and might as well account for the apparently unjuſt equality of rewards to all the good and of puniſhments to all the wicked in another world, on the reaſonable ſuppoſition, that the proceedings of providence are righteous and juſt, tho' determined by reaſons incomprehenſible to us; and will not ſuffer themſelves to be ſilenced by the ſame anſwer, when they clamor againſt the juſtice of the ſame providence, becauſe good men are ſometimes unhappy, and ill men happy in the preſent world? With what front can the laſt of theſe divines inſiſt on all the trifling reaſons they bring to reconcile an eternity of torments to the goodneſs and juſtice of an all-perfect Being, or may bring to ſhew that the fooliſh paradox of the ſtoics and the bloody laws of DRACO are agreeable to theſe attributes, whilſt they reject the arguments, that are drawn from what GOD has done in the conſtitution of the human nature, againſt what they aſſume that he deſigned to do?

IF acts of goodneſs and mercy, carried to exceſs, may become inſtances of weakneſs, or of ſomething worſe; if acts of ſeverity may become, in the ſame manner, inſtances of cruelty; if the bounds of the former are limited by the proportion neceſſary to encourage the virtuous, and to excite the vicious, who are capable of it, to amendment; if thoſe of the latter are limited by the proportion neceſſary to make reparation, and imprint terror on the minds of men; if it be arbitrary and tyrannical to make no diſtinction of perſons in diſſimilar, as it is partial to make this diſtinction in ſimilar caſes; if all this be agreeable to the cleareſt and moſt diſtinct ideas and notions we are able to frame of juſtice and equity; and if we are to judge of the conduct of God's providence in another world by theſe, as we muſt be, if we are to judge by theſe of the conduct of his providence in this world: if all this be ſo, I have a

right to conclude that they, who impute imaginary injuſtice to God here, impute very real injuſtice to him hereafter; and that it is impoſſible to believe that ſuch a man as CLARKE, to inſtance no other, could be in earneſt, when he affirmed that an exact diſtribution of rewards and puniſhments would be made, by this hypotheſis, in a future ſtate, and that ſuch a ſcheme of providence would appear worthy of infinite goodneſs and juſtice, as well as wiſdom. He forgot, when he aſſerted this, or he hoped his readers would forget, what he had aſſerted in another place, by which he deprived himſelf of the uſual evaſion, that he and all his tribe employ whenever they aſſume that God ſays, or does, any thing that it is impoſſible to reconcile to the divine perfections. He could have no recourſe to the incomprehenſibility of God's judgments on this occaſion. He had aſſerted, that the moral attributes are the ſame in God, as they are in our ideas. On this theological, for it is nothing leſs than a theiſtical principle, he had joined in the common cry againſt the irregularities, inequalities, and diſorders of this world, on which the charge of injuſtice againſt the providence of God is founded. To make this good, he appeals to human underſtanding. He appeals then to the ſame underſtanding, to the ſame ideas and notions, for the truth and ſufficiency of the hypotheſis, by which all that is amiſs here is to be ſet right, and the divine providence is to be juſtified on the whole. If the truth and ſufficiency of it to this purpoſe cannot be ſo made out, the cauſe of God is evidently betrayed by theſe men. They plead moſt ſtrenuouſly againſt his juſtice, and they ſeem to plead booty for it.

To aſſume that the conduct of divine providence towards mankind in this world has one criterion, and in the next world another, would be too extravagant. God is the ſame, his attributes are the ſame, he can act againſt them in neither; and

if we are competent to judge what they require of him in one, we are competent to judge what they require of him in both. Concerning his diſpenſations in both, therefore, we may argue on our general or abſtract notions of human juſtice, when we defend his providence againſt the accuſations, and even the pretended juſtifications of it by ſuch a writer as CLARKE, who, like another EUNOMIUS, preſumes to know GOD, his moral nature at leaſt, and to teach others to know him, as well as he knows himſelf. In arguing with other divines, who are leſs preſumptuous, for ſome ſuch there are, who do not pretend to reduce the whole œconomy of GOD's diſpenſations within the comprehenſion of human reaſon, we have another rule, ſufficient to combat this hypotheſis, and to ſecure us from error, one part of which they follow readily, and the other part of which they are obliged, like the reſt of their brethren, to evade in particular inſtances, tho' none of them dare to reject it avowedly and in general. The rule, I mean, is this: firſt, that we adore the Supreme Being in all his works, and in all the known proceedings of his providence, without aſſuming any poſtulata on the ſtrength of our own reaſon, which are neither confirmed, nor evidently ſuggeſted by them, and which may be ſet in oppoſition to the wiſdom, goodneſs, or juſtice of this Being, by dogmatical reaſoners à priori. Secondly, that we admit no propoſition to be true, nor any argument valid, which expreſſes or implies, on what authority ſoever, the leaſt conceivable imperfection in GOD. As to the firſt, the divines we ſpeak of here practiſe it very laudably when they refuſe to raiſe the importance of man, and the benevolence of GOD towards him ſo high, as to affirm, like the others, that he is the final cauſe of the world, and that the happineſs GOD was deſirous to communicate to him, was the final cauſe of his creation; when they take away theſe principal foundations of the accuſations brought againſt providence, and ſhew the ac-

cuſations themſelves to be made up of exaggeration, and falſe repreſentation. As to the ſecond, neither their caſe, nor their conduct, is the ſame. In the character of philoſophers they are under no neceſſity of maintaining this hypotheſis, nor obliged to excuſe that providence they never accuſed. But in the character of divines they are under this neceſſity, and their profeſſion obliges them to defend every part of the ſyſtem it was inſtituted to defend. They defend it, therefore, and they find the taſk of doing ſo in concert with their brethren much harder, than that of defending the cauſe of God againſt their brethren and the atheiſts in alliance, by ſhewing that there is more good than evil in this world, and that the happineſs of mankind is provided for ſufficiently in it.

LXIX.

IF the immortality of the ſoul could be proved by phyſical arguments, the eternity of rewards and puniſhments would be no neceſſary corollary deducible from it. But this immortality is a conſequence neceſſarily deducible from this eternity. This immortality, therefore, ſeems to reſt on a moral proof, and an inverted order of reaſoning, ſince if the juſtice of God requires that there ſhould be a ſtate of eternal rewards and puniſhments, the ſoul of man is immortal, certainly, and the ſame perſons, who were virtuous or vicious here, muſt receive their retribution there. To conceive this perſonal identity, which is aſcertained by our conſciouſneſs, and which is known as intuitively as our exiſtence in the preſent, and muſt be ſo in the future ſtate, unleſs we drink of the water of Lethe by the way, is not difficult ſurely; and it may be matter of ſurpriſe to obſerve how many ſcruples have been raiſed concerning it by men who ſeem to embrace the reſt of this doctrine

without any. The reſt of this doctrine is, however, as inconceivable as this part of it is plain; and whether we ſuppoſe that it was derived from an opinion of the immortality of the ſoul, or that this opinion was derived from it, neither way will it ſtand the teſt of reaſon; for in one caſe it is founded originally on mere imagination, or on phyſical and metaphyſical proofs that are inſufficient; and in the other, the opinion of the ſoul's immortality is founded originally on moral proofs that are precarious, to ſay no worſe of them yet.

It is ſaid that this opinion was brought into Greece firſt by Pherecydes of Syros. But the doctrine of future rewards and puniſhments had been brought thither long before. It is indeed far more probable that this opinion and this doctrine were imported together by Orpheus, and other antient poets, tho' the maſter of Pythagoras might be the firſt who writ in proſe on theſe, or on any philoſophical ſubject. But, however this was, it is obvious enough that they, who believed the immortality of the ſoul, and future rewards and puniſhments in another life, did not believe an eternity of torments to be the common fate of the wicked. The prieſts had reaſons of private as well as of public intereſt to encreaſe theſe terrors; and yet in days of the blindeſt ſuperſtition they tried to reconcile them, by ſeveral ſoftenings, to the juſtice of God, and to the belief of men. The whole mythology of the other world was ſo abſurd, and ſo confuſed in itſelf, and it is come down to us in ſo many dark and inconſiſtent reports, that the learned attempt in vain to make out any coherent ſyſtem of it. Thus much however we know, that whilſt the pagans inſtalled in the choir of the gods ſome men, whoſe ſepulchres were to be ſeen on earth, for the good or great actions they had done in their generations, "viros "claros,

" claros et fortes *, " and beſtowed on theſe a ſort of ſedentary immortality, they held that there was a middle ſtate, wherein they who were neither good enough for heaven, nor bad enough for hell, the " animæ ſanabiles " of PLATO, ſhould be purged, and their ſtate of probation, as it were, lengthened. This purgatory your church has borrowed: but the heathen divines applied the belief of it to a very theiſtical purpoſe, to juſtify the providence of GOD in his dealings with men; and your church has made uſe of this belief to a very mercenary purpoſe, to bubble the laity, and to enrich the prieſthood. We know further that the ſyſtem of a metempſychoſis, according to which the perſons, who exiſted in the human ſtate, had pre-exiſted, and would exiſt again, after they went out of this, in others; and that the ſeveral ranks and orders of beings in heaven, as well as the ſeveral degrees and kinds of puniſhments in hell, were invented to anſwer the objections that were made to the government of GOD in this world, and that might be made to the œconomy of the ſame government in the next; if it was aſſumed that all thoſe, who did not deſerve to be damned at their going out of this life for what they had done in it, were ſaved alike, and that all thoſe, who did not deſerve to be ſaved, were damned at the ſame time in a lump. Theſe hypotheſes, and others of the ſame ſort, were very extravagant no doubt; but ſtill they were well intended. They afforded anſwers at leaſt as good as the objections made to the diſpenſations of providence in this life, and they rendered thoſe of the ſame providence in another life leſs repugnant to the notions of juſtice.

How great this repugnancy is, and how much reaſon there is to apprehend that it ſhould deſtroy little by little, among men

* TULLY.

who

who reaſon for themſelves, and are not ſtupidly implicit, all thoſe impreſſions which the belief of a future ſtate is ſo uſefully deſigned to give; rather than to hope that the received hypotheſis ſhould fortify theſe impreſſions, or even preſerve them on the minds of ſuch men; two obſervations will help to ſhew: one of which cannot be contradicted, and the other of which is ſo eaſily proved, that, like ſelf-evident propoſitions which admit of no proof, it ſcarce requires any. That which cannot be contradicted is this. As much as chriſtian divines are hampered by ſome expreſſions in holy writ, there are thoſe among them who appear very evidently to have diſbelieved the eternity of the torments of hell; for it is too little to ſay that they doubted about them, or ſeemed to oppoſe them: and theſe are men who bow to none in ſuperiority of parts and learning. Such too there were in the church of old. That which ſcarce requires any proof is this. They who maintain this eternity are reduced to employ ſuch arbitrary aſſumptions, ſuch inconſiſtency in what they advance, and ſuch futility of argument, as they would reproach ſeverely to others, and be aſhamed to employ themſelves on any ſubject that was not theological. The writings of theſe men are in every hand, and I dare appeal to you, whether you can force your inward ſenſe to admit that eternal torments in another life are conſiſtent with any notions of juſtice you are able to frame, either becauſe every ſin is an offence againſt an infinite Being, and therefore deſerves infinite puniſhment, as if every offence was to be puniſhed, not according to the degree of it, but in proportion to the dignity of the lawgiver; or becauſe theſe torments may be a warning to the heathen, whoſe ſtate of probation may be extended beyond this life, and muſt be extended, to make this argument good, beyond the conſummation of all things; or finally, for it would be tedious and uſeleſs to mention any more, becauſe the damned may

may grow mad, and not feel their misery, or grow fond of it, in which case if it was not cruel, it would be absurd, to continue their punishments?

Compare the greatest human virtue you can imagine, exposed to all the calamities of life during a term of fifty or threescore years, and recompensed with happiness which exceeds vastly in every instance of it, as much as in it's duration, the sum total of all these calamities, that is, with happiness infinite and eternal. Compare the greatest human wickedness you can imagine, accompanied with an uninterrupted unmingled affluence of every thing which can go to the constitution of human felicity during the same number of years, and after that punished in a state of excessive and never-ending torments. What proportion, in the name of God, will you find between the virtue and the recompence, between the wickedness and the punishment? One of these persons has amends made to him beyond all conceivable degrees of a just reparation. The other has punishment inflicted on him beyond all conceivable degrees of a necessary terror. Again. Suppose two men of equal virtue, but of very opposite fortunes in this life. The one extremely happy, the other as unhappy during the whole course of it. Are these men recompensed alike in the next? If they are, there arises such a disproportion of happiness in favor of one of these virtuous men, as must appear inconsistent with justice, and can be imputed to nothing but partiality, which theism will never impute to the Supreme Being, whatever artificial theology may do and does in many instances. Are these two men not recompensed alike? Has one of them a greater, and the other a less share of happiness in that heaven, to which they both go? If this be said and allowed, the same disproportion, nay, a disproportion infinitely greater will remain. The difference must be made

by

by the degree, it cannot be made by the duration of this happineſs, which both of them are to enjoy eternally. Now any degree of happineſs the more, tho' never ſo ſmall, enjoyed eternally, will exceed infinitely not only all the happineſs of earth, but all that of heaven which can be enjoyed in any determined number of years. If you ſuppoſe two perſons of equal guilt, one of whom has been as happy as a wicked man can be, and the other of whom has ſuffered as much miſery in this life as a wicked man can be thought to deſerve; the ſame reaſoning will hold good: the diſproportion of puniſhments in one caſe will be like the diſproportion of rewards in the other, and that juſtice, which is ſaid to be the ſame in GOD as in our ideas, will be acquitted in neither. A divine, preſſed by ſuch arguments, might have recourſe, for aught I know, to ſomething like that balance, wherein it was ſaid that WOLLASTON affected to weigh happineſs and miſery even to grains and ſcruples, in order to aſſume that the additional degrees of happineſs in heaven, and of miſery in hell, ceaſe as ſoon as the account between the two worlds is made even, and the diſproportion taken away; after which the two good men and the two wicked men remain in the different ſtates allotted to them, on an equal foot. This might be ſaid by one accuſtomed to make hypotheſes at random and without any other rule than his want of them, but I cannot think it would deſerve a ſerious anſwer.

LXX.

SOMETHING elſe may be ſaid, that will appear more reaſonable at firſt, and that will be found, on examination, only to ſet the injuſtice of the aſſumed future diſpenſa-

tions of providence in a ſtill ſtronger light. It may be ſaid, that altho' ſuch proportions, as I have mentioned, are included in our notions of juſtice, ſtrictly taken; yet rewards and puniſhments do often exceed theſe ſtrict bounds, without being deemed repugnant to juſtice, and marks of weakneſs, or of cruelty, in him who beſtows them, or inflicts them. This now is true in certain degrees, and in certain circumſtances, according to which theſe degrees are to be regulated. Exceſſive mercy may be vicious, as well as exceſſive ſeverity, in the judgments of men; and they muſt be exceſſive when the particular proportions in which they are meaſured out, exceed by far what is neceſſary to encourage the good, and to terrify the wicked, the two general objects of juſtice. The bounds of human juſtice are ſtraiter, or larger, but ſtill it has bounds; and whenever the former are tranſgreſſed, the circumſtance which juſtifies this tranſgreſſion muſt be ſome public good. Such is the nature of human juſtice, according to which we are to judge of divine juſtice in our diſputes with theſe men who ſay that they are the ſame.

For my part, who do not think that they are the ſame in ſuch a ſenſe, as to make us adequate judges of one as well as of the other, I could eaſily perſuade myſelf, if I admitted this hypotheſis, that the mercy and goodneſs of God ſtand as it were on one ſide of his juſtice, that his mercy pardons the offenders who amend conſiſtently with his juſtice; for elſe, as all men offend, all men would be puniſhed; and that his goodneſs may carry on the work his mercy has begun, and place ſuch as are the objects of both in a ſtate where they will be exempt perhaps eternally from all natural, and, as much as finite creatures can be, from moral evil. I could perſuade myſelf, that they who are objects of neither, and are not therefore pardoned, remain, if they do remain, ſecluded from the happi-

happineſs of the others, and reduced to a forlorn ſtate. Some ſuch hypotheſis, where no certainty is to be had, I could admit as probable, becauſe it contradicts none of the divine attributes, ſets none of them at variance, nor breaks their harmony: for tho' I fear to pronounce what GOD will do, and am always aſtoniſhed at the boldneſs of thoſe who pronounce not only what he will do, but what he ought to do; yet I think myſelf obliged, among the various opinions that are, or may be entertained of the divine proceedings, to embrace as probable, if I embrace any, that and that alone which comes neareſt to the beſt notions I can frame of moral perfection. It is not poſſible for me, therefore, to conceive any attributes ſtanding on the other ſide of GOD's juſtice. No attribute can hold that place, unleſs cruelty be a divine attribute; which it would be blaſphemous to ſuppoſe, tho' the Jews, and ſome other barbarous people, have ſuppoſed it to be ſo.

To reform offenders is neither the ſole, nor the principal end of puniſhments. Thoſe of an inferior kind may have this intention. Thoſe that are capital muſt have ſome other, and it would be too ridiculous to make the hangman, who executes a criminal, paſs for the reformer of his manners. The criminal is executed for the ſake of others, and that he, who did much hurt in his life, may not only be deprived of the power of doing any more, but may do ſome good too by the terror of his death. If a prince, or a magiſtrate, tortured and put to death clandeſtinely, without regard to reparation or terror, even ſuch as deſerved capital puniſhment, he would be deemed a tyrant; becauſe the principal end of puniſhment is not obtained by this proceeding; and ſuch a prince, or magiſtrate, could have no motive to puniſh, but the pleaſure of puniſhing, which no ſpirit but that of anger, vengeance, and cruelty can inſpire. A ſpirit of juſtice puniſhes; but the judge

who has no other ſpirit, puniſhes with regret. If theſe notions are true, and ſurely they are true, how can any one, who believes that GOD is an all-perfect Being, believe at the ſame time that he does what would deſerve the higheſt cenſure among his imperfect creatures? None but thoſe who accuſe him of injuſtice in this life, can believe him ſo unjuſt in the next. They make him more unjuſt, than the prince or magiſtrate would be in the caſe that has been ſuppoſed. If the torments of hell take place before the conſummation of all things, he is as unjuſt as this prince, or magiſtrate. But if ſentence is not pronounced, nor judgment executed, till then, he is infinitely more ſo. Clandeſtine puniſhments may have ſome of the effects of juſtice, and may contribute in ſome degree to the reformation of men, or at leaſt to the good of ſociety, by putting out of it ſuch as are hurtful to it. But what effect of this kind can further puniſhments have, when the ſyſtem of human government is at an end, and the ſtate of probation over; when there is no further room for reformation of the wicked, nor reparation to the injured by thoſe who injured them; in fine, when the eternal lots of all mankind are caſt, and terror is of no further uſe?

YOU will ſay perhaps, for it is commonly ſaid, that altho' it be too late, after the conſummation of all things, or of the ſyſtem of this world at leaſt, to obtain the ends of human juſtice, yet the divine juſtice remains to be ſatisfied; and that this cannot be ſatisfied unleſs every human creature, who has ſinned beyond all meaſure of pardon here, be puniſhed eternally hereafter. Can this now be urged by any one, who has aſſumed that divine and human juſtice are the ſame, and that GOD appeals to man for the equity of his proceedings; or, indeed, by any one elſe? Sure I am, it cannot be ſo, conſiſtently, by the former, nor reaſonably by the latter; for

tho' it may be ſaid, to ſoften this bold aſſumption, that juſtice is truly the ſame in GOD as it is in our ideas, but that, GOD being infinitely ſuperior to man, an extreme difference muſt needs ariſe, in the exerciſe and particular applications of it, between divine and human juſtice; yet this will appear to be an evaſion in the preſent caſe and not an anſwer. A prince, or a magiſtrate, may do no doubt very juſtly, nay it is eſſential to juſtice that he ſhould do, what would be unjuſt and criminal in a private man. The rank he holds, and the power with which he is inveſted, give him this right: but neither ſuperior rank, nor ſuperior power, can give him a right to pervert juſtice, nor to act in oppoſition to thoſe laws of the ſociety which ought to be the rules of his conduct. Thus the Supreme Being, whoſe majeſty, wiſdom, and power are elevated far above all our conceptions, may do juſtly, in a multitude of inſtances, what princes, and magiſtrates, have no more the right, than the power of doing. But then we may preſume to ſay, that there is this ſimilitude between the two caſes. Tho' the right and power of the Supreme Being, are not delegated, they may be limited like theirs. This I mean. They are limited, if we believe certain divines, by eternal fitneſſes and unfitneſſes of things independent on him, according to which he regulates his conduct, and all rational beings are obliged to regulate theirs, becauſe all rational beings are capable of knowing them. But if we reject this doctrine, as, I think, we ought to do, and not without horror, we muſt be convinced, however, that the Author of all nature, in conſtituting our ſyſtem, conſtituted certain ſpecific phyſical and moral natures, according to which he governs the world: from whence it will follow, that the reaſons, on which his providence acts in the preſent ſyſtem of things, may be known to us in ſome inſtances, and muſt be unknown to us in others; whilſt the whole œconomy of any future ſyſtem muſt

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be abſolutely impenetrable. We are able to account, in great meaſure, for the general diſtribution of good and evil here, tho' not perhaps for every particular inſtance. But we are wholly unable to ſay what will happen hereafter. This only we know, that neither here, nor hereafter, GOD will deal with his creatures in direct violation of thoſe natures and eſſences of things which he himſelf has conſtituted, and has given them the means of knowing. He will not deal with them according to one rule here, and according to another hereafter.

As we muſt believe, if we think worthily of the Supreme Being, that he will not proceed with his human creatures, in any ſtate, in violation of that juſtice which he has conſtituted in the nature of things, and whereof he has made them able to acquire ideas and notions; ſo we muſt be on our guard leſt we ſhould be induced to believe that he will proceed, at any time, agreeably to thoſe affections and paſſions which have ſo great a ſhare in directing our conduct, and ſo much influence over our thoughts. Sovereign reaſon is exempt from affection and paſſion; and the great cauſe of error in theiſm is this, we judge of it with all our affections and paſſions about us. What the effects of this cauſe were in the heathen world we all know. But few of us conſider that the ſame cauſe has worked ever ſince, works ſtill, and if it does not produce a crop of errors as foul and as abominable as thoſe, it produces a crop not leſs abundant.

LXXI.

WHATEVER the vulgar religion of the heathen taught, their philoſophers, even thoſe of them who aſſumed providence to be the moſt active in directing the affairs

affairs of this world, were unanimous in their opinion, that the Supreme Being was never angry, nor ever did harm *. The firſt part needs no commentary, the ſecond very little. They believed that GOD puniſhed in this life, but they believed that his puniſhments were inflicted for the general advantage of mankind; that the evil which happened to the virtuous was deſigned by his goodneſs to try their virtue, to preſerve and to improve it by exerciſe; that the evil which came on the wicked was directed by his juſtice to chaſtiſe their crimes, to terrify, and reform; and that a Being, who acted always on motives of goodneſs and juſtice, could be never ſaid with truth and propriety to do harm. Such was the language of heathen divines, and thus they repreſented the proceedings of GOD to man. But our artificial theology holds another, which is very different. Let us mention ſome of thoſe doctrines which are of this kind, and begin and terminate in that which is here oppoſed particularly. According to them, GOD loves, and he hates, he is partial, angry, and revengeful. He creates ſome rational beings with a determination to ſave them, and others only to damn them. It is not ſure that repentance and amendment can appeaſe the wrath of GOD, nor any thing leſs than a ſacrifice. He has given a law, the law of nature and of reaſon, to all his human creatures; the ſanctions of it are a natural tendency of virtue to the happineſs, and of vice to the miſery of mankind: but theſe ſanctions are ſo imperfect, that they cannot procure obedience to the law, even with the ſupplemental help of occaſional interpoſitions on the part of GOD, and of a conſtant diſcipline of civil laws on the part of man. To ſupply this imperfection, therefore, there muſt be neceſſarily ſome fur-

* Num iratum timemus JOVEM? At hoc quidem commune eſt omnium philoſophorum . . . . . nunquam nec iraſci Deum, nec nocere. TULL. de Off. L. 3.

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ther ſanctions of this law, and theſe are the rewards and puniſhments reſerved to a future ſtate.

Here is ample room for reflections. I ſhall make but three. The term "imperfection" is, in this caſe, employed equivocally; for we may conceive an abſolute and a relative perfection, and that which appears imperfect in one of theſe conſiderations, may be perfect in the other, according to the deſign of the lawgiver. We may preſume to ſay, that if it had been in the order of God's deſigns to make the ſtate of mankind as happy as the univerſal and ſteady obſervation of this law would make it, he would have made the ſanctions of the law as perfect as the law. But we ſee by what he has done, which is the only ſure way of knowing what he deſigned, that we were made to live in a ſtate of moderate and mixed happineſs. His law ſhews us the perfection of our nature, in which that of our happineſs conſiſts. Reaſon draws us to it, affections and paſſions from it; and our free-will, inclining ſometimes to one, and ſometimes to the other, maintains that ſtate which mankind is appointed to hold in the order of rational beings. Had the ſanctions of the law of nature been ſtronger, we ſhould have riſen above this ſtate. Had they been weaker, we ſhould have ſunk below it. Thus they are relatively perfect, relatively to the deſign of the lawgiver; and neither the goodneſs, nor the juſtice of God, required that we ſhould be made better, nor happier, than we are.

But, further, if we will ſuppoſe any other ſanctions neceſſary to enforce the original and univerſal law of God, the law of our nature, they cannot be thoſe of a future ſtate. Future rewards and puniſhments are ſanctions of the evangelical, as temporal were of the moſaical law. Sanctions muſt be contained in the law, they muſt be a part of it. In their promulgation

gation they muſt precede, as the law does, neceſſarily all acts of obedience, or diſobedience to it; tho' in their execution they are retroſpective to theſe acts, and are the conſequences of them. So likewiſe new ſanctions may be added to an old law by the ſame authority that made it. But juſtice requires that the new be as public as the old, and that the authority of them be as well aſcertained to every one who is bound by the law. Theſe conditions are eſſential, there can be no ſanction without them; and therefore the rewards and puniſhments of a future ſtate, which have not theſe conditions, are no ſanctions of the natural law. Reaſon and experience, that taught men this law, ſhewed them the ſanctions of it. But neither of them pointed out theſe. Have we any grounds to believe, that they were known to the antediluvian world? Do they ſtand at the head or tail of the ſeven precepts given to the ſons of NOAH? Were they ſo much as mentioned by MOSES, who had need of every ſanction, that his knowledge, or his imagination, could ſuggeſt, to govern the unruly people to whom he gave a law in the name of GOD? Were they believed, was that of future puniſhments, at leaſt, believed by any of the philoſophers of Greece? PYTHAGORAS told ſtrange ſtories, indeed, of the infernal regions, where he had been in his ſeveral tranſmigrations from body to body; and PLATO had his informations from ERUS the Pamphylian, who came back like a meſſenger ſent on purpoſe to give an account of this new-diſcovered world. But were they in earneſt? It would be ridiculous to think that they were. Both of them affected to be lawgivers, and it is no wonder that in this character they employed an hypotheſis, which other lawgivers had employed with ſucceſs in thoſe eaſtern nations with which they were acquainted.

From ſuch religions, from ſuch philoſophy, and from ſuch political inſtitutions, the jews, who picked up many ſcraps of all theſe among the Ægyptians and their neighbors in the eaſt, introduced the doctrine of future rewards and puniſhments into their own, ſoon after the captivity of Babylon at leaſt. But whenever they introduced it, this doctrine was not of their own growth moſt certainly. It was not derived from their original, revelation: and accordingly it was not received by that ſect who adhered ſtrictly to the law. Thus we ſee that this aſſumed double ſanction, far from being coeval with the law of nature, or any poſitive law of God, was unknown long to the nations who lived under the former, and even to his choſen people who lived under the latter; and that when it was known, and wherever it was known, it was plainly of human, not of divine authority.

My third reflection is this. As the double ſanction of rewards and puniſhments in a future ſtate was in fact invented by men, it appears to have been ſo by the evident marks of humanity that characteriſe it. The notions whereon it is founded are taken rather from the defects, than the excellencies of the human nature, and ſavour more of the human paſſions, than of juſtice or prudence; for Seneca ſaid very conſiſtently, tho' Plato, whom he quotes, very inconſiſtently, "nemo prudens punit quia peccatum eſt, ſed ne peccetur," How worthily ſoever ſome philoſophers might think of the Supreme Being in this, and in other reſpects, who did not believe that God ſpared the wicked in this world in oppoſition to his juſtice, that they might have an apparent reaſon to give for his puniſhment of them in another world in oppoſition to his mercy and juſtice both; the vulgar heathen believed their Jupiter, as well as their inferior divinities, liable

to so many human passions, that they might be easily induced to believe him liable, in his government of mankind, to those of love and hatred, of anger and vengeance. They might attribute these to him in his public, as well as the others in his private capacity; for, according to them, he acted in both: and it is hard to say which of these passions could be attributed to him with greater irreverence. The jews indeed, as often as they made GOD descend from heaven, and as much as they made him reside on earth, were far from cloathing him with corporeity, and imputing corporeal vices to him. But the very first, and almost every other point of their theology, history and tradition shewed him in two other capacities, one not so shocking as what the heathens imputed to JUPITER in one capacity, but little less irreverent; for the Creator of all things, the one Supreme Being, was at the same time, according to all these, the tutelary local deity of a family, and a nation, with whom he entered into covenants that bound him and them mutually. I need to descend into no further particulars. They are enough known, and extremely suitable to the first principle of this system, which contains such instances of partiality in love and hatred, of furious anger, and unrelenting vengeance in a long series of arbitrary judgments, and bloody executions, as no people on earth, but this, would have ascribed, I do not say to GOD, but to the worst of those monsters who are suffered, or sent by GOD, for a short time, to punish the iniquity of men. Is it any matter of wonder now, that the greatest part of a people trained up in such notions of the Supreme Being, and of his arbitrary government here, should be disposed to receive a heathenish doctrine, which taught nothing more arbitrary, tho' a little more cruel, of his proceedings hereafter? Is it any matter of wonder that they, who believed GOD inflicted punishments to the third and fourth generation on innocent persons, should believe that he punished

offenders themſelves eternally; if even they did not ſoften this ſeverity by a metempſychoſis, or ſome other way which I do not well remember, nor think it worth my while to examine?

THIS doctrine was in vogue in the church of MOSES, when that of JESUS began. The ſadducees declined, the phariſees floriſhed, and the great ſyſtematiſer of chriſtianity was himſelf a phariſee. He, who inſiſts ſo ſignally on an arbitrary exerciſe of the power of GOD, might have eſtabliſhed very conſiſtently this doctrine of eternal rewards and puniſhments, by his goſpel, if it had been eſtabliſhed by no other. But it was part of the original revelation; and how abſurd ſoever it might be in the jews to take it from the gentiles, who had taught it without either reaſon or revelation to authoriſe them, it might ſeem reaſonable to the chriſtians to adopt it. When the jews aſſumed it on the faith of idolatrous and ſuperſtitious people, they added a new ſanction to an old law. When the chriſtians adopted it, they received the new law, and the new ſanction together, on the faith of the ſame revelation. Thus one objection to the doctrine was prevented, and every man, who entered into the new covenant, knew this condition of it beforehand. But the other objections remained ſtill in force; and on the whole it was found ſo impoſſible to reconcile this ſanction of eternal puniſhments to the divine attributes, and theſe future inviſible judgments of GOD to the actual proceedings of his providence, that in the early days of chriſtianity it was rejected by ſome not inferior to any in knowledge or in zeal.

LXXII.

THE hypotheſis of a rotation of ſouls, out of which even the ſoul of CHRIST was not, I think, excepted, at leaſt by ORIGEN, ſeemed preferable to this. The makers of ſyſtems ſaw that the general tendency of virtue to promote the happineſs, and of vice to promote the unhappineſs of mankind, by which GOD made it the common intereſt of his human creatures to cultivate one, and to reſtrain the other, were the ſole means that his infinite wiſdom had ordained to this end in the ordinary courſe of his providence; and that, if the wicked were ſometimes puniſhed, either collectively or individually, by extraordinary interpoſitions real or apparent of the ſame providence, this happened rarely, after long forbearance, and not till the meaſure of iniquity was full. They ſaw that the mercy of GOD was in this manner of proceeding as conſpicuous as his juſtice, and that both were directed to maintain ſuch a moral ſtate as the imperfection of human nature admitted. No wonder then if they found it hard to believe that the ſame GOD, who dealed thus with his creatures here, dealed ſo differently with them hereafter; and that he, who puniſhed to a gracious end, the maintainance of a moral ſyſtem, with meaſure and proportion here, puniſhed to no end at all, when this ſyſtem was at an end, with inconceivable and eternal torments. They might think, according to the vulgar theological notion, that the wrath of GOD againſt ſinners for what they had done in this ſyſtem was not appeaſed when they went out of it. But they might think too, and it is plain they did think, that wrath itſelf could not exceed all proportion ſo far, as to appoint a ſtate of eternal torments to ſucceed a very ſhort ſtate of probation. They mingled therefore ſome notions of juſtice with this of wrath, and imagined

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ſeveral ſtates of probation; that ſouls, for inſtance, were ſent to inform ſome bodies in recompence, or puniſhment of what they had done in others; that the wicked ſuffered for their impurity, but that in new ſtates of probation they would have new occaſions of purification.

By ſome ſuch hypotheſes they endeavored to ſoften a doctrine that ſhocked their reaſon, and could not be reconciled to any moral attribute, no, nor to the phyſical attributes of God, not to his wiſdom at leaſt. But the general tide of artificial theology ran the other way; and time, and dogmatical affirmation eſtabliſhed abſurdity in this caſe, as they have done in many. Fathers and councils decreed, and chriſtians believed, that the Supreme Being dooms almoſt all his rational creatures, all whom theſe men do not think fit to ſave, to eternal torments for what they have done in this life. He created them, in effect, to be eternally miſerable, according to this doctrine, ſince the term of this life can be reckoned for nothing in an infinite duration, and yet is to decide their ſtate to all eternity. The doctrine we ſpeak of aſſumes ſuch a proceeding neceſſary to ſatisfy divine juſtice; whereas in truth it can be aſcribed to no principle, but that of anger, and to the revenge of a being who puniſhes to the full extent of his power, and merely for the pleaſure of puniſhing, and without any regard to juſtice, creatures who did not offend him merely for the pleaſure of offending him, creatures who had free will, and made wrong elections; creatures who might plead, for that plea the worſt of them might make, if not in excuſe for their crimes, yet in mitigation of their puniſhment, their frailties, their paſſions, the imperfections of their nature, and the numerous temptations to which they ſtood expoſed.

LXXIII.

IT is juſtly matter of ſcandal, and it would be matter of ſurpriſe, to hear men, who acknowledge an all-perfect Being, and who ſpeak with ſo much reverence of him on ſome occaſions, ſpeak of him with ſo little on this, and others, if we did not obſerve in general that fooliſh preſumption with which they are apt to erect themſelves into the ſtandard and meaſure of every thing; and in particular that prophane licence which the chriſtian theology has derived from the jewiſh, and which divines have rendered ſo familiar and ſo habitual, that men blaſpheme without knowing they blaſpheme, and that their very devotion is impious. The licence, I mean, is that of reaſoning and of ſpeaking, even in common converſation, of the divine, as of the human nature, operations, and proceedings; ſometimes with, and ſometimes without the ſalvo of thoſe diſtinguiſhing epithets and forms of ſpeech which can in very few inſtances diſtinguiſh enough. The jewiſh ſcriptures aſcribe to GOD not only corporeal appearance, but corporeal action, and all the inſtruments of it; eyes to ſee, ears to hear, mouth and tongue to articulate, hands to handle, and feet to walk. Divines tell us, indeed, that we are not to underſtand all this according to the literal ſignification. The meaning is, they ſay, that GOD has a power to execute all thoſe acts, to the effecting of which theſe parts in us are inſtrumental*. The literal ſignification is indeed abominable, and the flimſy analogical veil thrown over it, is ſtolen from the wardrobe of EPICURUS; for he taught that the gods had not literally bodies, but ſomething like to bodies, "quaſi corpus:" not blood, but ſomething like to

* Vid. Serm. of the archbiſhop of Dublin, on Rom. viii. 29, 30.

blood,

blood, " quaſi ſanguinem†." This analogy, if it could be allowed, would juſtify in good meaſure your HOMER as a philoſopher, for as a poet he wanted no excuſe; and ſomething of this kind has been attempted. But who is there, philoſopher, or poet, except jewiſh and chriſtian rabbins, that can employ in good earneſt images taken from corporeal ſubſtance, from corporeal action, and from the inſtruments of it, to give us notions in any degree proper of GOD's manner of being, and of that divine inconceivable energy in which the action of GOD conſiſts, and by which the natural and moral worlds were produced, and are preſerved and governed? The more human they are, the leſs adequate they muſt be; and whilſt they do no good one way, they do much hurt another. They cannot exalt, they muſt debaſe our conceptions, and accuſtom the mind inſenſibly to confound divine with human ideas and notions, GOD with man. This happened in the caſe of the anthropomorphites, who imagined that GOD had an human body, becauſe it was ſaid by MOSES that he created man in his own image. So dangerous are theſe expreſſions, whoſe literal ſenſe is obvious to all, whilſt the analogical is underſtood by few, and attended to by fewer. So falſe is the reaſon given in excuſe for them, that we muſt know GOD this way, or not at all. Far from making us know him better, they lead us into error. They make us unknow him, if I may ſay ſo, and impoſe an imaginary being upon us for the true GOD. Other paſſages of the ſcriptures confirmed the error of the anthropomorphites; and if it was heretical in the chriſtian church, it could not be deemed, one would think, very heretical by the jews; ſince they held communion with

† . . . . Quidni igitur ſimiliter, ſays GASSENDI, fateatur eſſe in Deo non paſſiones, ſed quaſi paſſiones? atque adeo non iraſci illum, ſed quaſi iraſci; nec teneri gratia, ſed quaſi teneri?

them so far, as I remember, that they eat the paschal lamb together.

Thus again, and to bring the observation quite home to the present purpose; the same scriptures, that are so apt in many places to make those who read them represent the Supreme Being to themselves like an old man looking out of a cloud, as painters have represented him often, ascribe to him at the same time, by the whole tenor of them, all the affections and passions which characterised the nation of the jews, whilst they were a nation, very strongly, and which are not entirely worn out by their dispersion, and their commerce with others. God loves, according to their theology; but he loves with a strange predilection and partiality for them, who are not certainly the most lovely of his human creatures. He loves like Deiotarus, a king of Galatia, who for the sake of one son put the rest of his children to death. He is merciful too, but his mercy is arbitrary, and depends on mere will. "He will have mercy on whom he will have mercy," and when he will have mercy, "and whom he will, he hardens." Even they who esteem themselves his chosen people, who, we say, have been hardened, and they say have been chastised, have waited for it these two thousand years, and wait still. Towards mankind in general, his anger is often furious, his hatred inveterate, his vengeance unrelenting. But when the wicked repent of their sins, he repents sometimes of his severity. What a description now is this of an all-perfect Being? What a task have men, several of whom are great masters of reason, undertaken, when they have undertaken to reconcile such doctrines to his perfections, and to other doctrines directly contrary to these, that are interspersed in the same books? The task is hard, indeed, but their profession made it necessary; and all the force of great learning, and of great parts

has been proſtituted to conceal the ignorance, and to palliate the errors of the moſt illiterate, ſuperſtitious, and abſurd race of men who ever pretended to a ſyſtem of things divine or human.

LXXIV.

ANALOGY is employed in this caſe as it is in the other, and indeed in every caſe where theological paradoxes, which are not a few, are to be defended. If analogy itſelf, ſuch as ſome divines aſſume and repreſent it, could be defended, there would be no caſe, wherein it ought to be employed with all its force more than in this; for, ſurely, to impute human paſſions, even the worſt of them, to the Supreme Being, is not further off from blaſphemy, than it is to aſcribe to him a corporeal form, and the ſenſations, and the limbs, and the actions of a man. It is not true, tho' it has been aſſerted, that this analogy is obvious to every one, and that no one can think on reflection that any of theſe paſſions can affect literally the divine nature *. It is on the contrary as true, that a multitude of good chriſtians, far the greateſt number, believe at this hour that the divine nature is affected by them, as it is true that a multitude of good heathens repreſented to themſelves their gods and goddeſſes, even the father of gods and men, under an human form, or conceived at leaſt, which is much the ſame, that theſe divinities took the human nature upon them whenever either buſineſs or pleaſure called them to converſe and act with the children of men. Let us not imagine that any thing is too abſurd for men to believe even on reflection. Heathen, jews, chriſtians, have believed

* Vid. Serm. ſupr. citat.

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the abſurdities I have mentioned; and great metaphyſicians and divines have believed this analogy *. It would be tedious to take notice of all that has been ſaid, ſtupidly enough by ſome, and not without a little air of plauſible ingenuity by others, to eſtabliſh this notion. I ſhall ſay no more about it, than my ſubject requires neceſſarily, and even that will be ſufficient, I think, to explode a doctrine, that may be turned ſtrongly againſt revealed religion, and that cuts up the very root of natural.

All the knowledge that God has given us the means to acquire, and therefore all that he deſigned we ſhould have of his phyſical and moral nature and attributes, if they may be

* The lord preſident of Scotland, who is no divine by profeſſion, but ſomething better, and more uſeful to ſociety, deals however too much in divinity; and the contagion of Hutchinson's writings and converſation makes him really mad quoad hoc, for there is ſuch a madneſs, notwithſtanding all his ſagacity, good ſenſe, and knowledge. In that ſtrange book, which he has writ in this delirium againſt Tindal, and which I have quoted ſomewhere, he ſays very rationally, "that we ought to be amazed at the impudence of thoſe "who pre-"tend to decide what God is or is not, and what he can or can not do, from "the notions they have framed to themſelves of his attributes, his nature and "perfection." But he himſelf affirms, in the ſame book, a multitude of facts relating to the Deity, and to the whole œconomy of divine providence, on the faith of jewiſh and chriſtian reveries, and his own or his maſter's whimſies; juſt as the others do on the faith of theirs. The cenſure, therefore, which he paſſes on them, may be juſtly paſſed on himſelf, unleſs it can be ſhewn, which it never can be, that what he advances is better proved to be true in fact, than what they advance is demonſtrated conformable to right reaſon. Type, emblem, and analogy are the common means to diſguiſe the abſurdity both of the facts and reaſonings they maintain; the conſequence of which is abominable: for the vulgar may very well underſtand literally, what is pretended to be ſaid analogically only, of the Supreme Being, of his nature, and of his proceedings, in the Bible; ſince this writer aſſerts it to be extremely plain, that the language of the ſcriptures, which deſcribes the Deity's actions, affections, and inclinations in terms borrowed from the uſage, the ſentiments, and reſolutions of men, is not ſo figurative as it is generally ſuppoſed to be, and that we ought to underſtand it ſomething more literally, than reaſoners are willing to allow.

conſidered ſeparately, as we are apt to conſider them, and if the latter and every thing we aſcribe to theſe, are not to be reſolved rather into the former, into his infinite intelligence, wiſdom, and power; all this knowledge, I ſay, is derived from his works, and from the tenor of that providence, by which he governs them. We ſee him in a reflected, not in a direct light. But, becauſe we cannot frame full and adequate ideas of this ſort, nor anſwer every queſtion impertinent curioſity may aſk; will it follow that we have, properly ſpeaking, no knowledge at all of his attributes, nor of the manner in which they are exerciſed? Every part of the immenſe univerſe, and the order and harmony of the whole, as far as we are able to carry our obſervations and diſcoveries, are not only conformable to our ideas or notions of wiſdom and power, but theſe ideas or notions were impreſſed originally and principally by them on every attentive mind; and men were led to conclude with the utmoſt certainty, that a being of infinite wiſdom and power made, preſerved, and governed the ſyſtem. As far as we can diſcern, we diſcern theſe in all his works; and where we cannot diſcern them, it is manifeſtly due to our imperfection, not to his. God cannot be in any inſtance unwiſe nor impotent. This now is real knowledge, or there is no ſuch thing as knowledge. We acquire it immediately in the objects themſelves, in God, and in nature, the work of God. We know what wiſdom and power are: we know, both intuitively and by the help of our ſenſes, that ſuch as we conceive them to be ſuch they appear in the work; and therefore we know demonſtratively that ſuch they are in the worker.

What then could a very reſpectable writer * mean, when he ſaid, ſpeaking of divine knowledge and wiſdom, that God

* Archbiſhop King, ubi ſupr.

muſt

muſt either have theſe, or other faculties and powers equivalent to them, and adequate to the mighty effects which proceed from them? It is plain he meaned by this ſuppoſition, in a caſe where nothing is aſcribed but what ought to be aſcribed to God, to prepare the way for the ſame ſuppoſition in a caſe where he was to excuſe the jewiſh theology, and his own, for attributing in terms to God thoſe affections and paſſions, which cannot be ſo attributed without impiety. The archbiſhop would have had no need to run into theſe abſurdities, nor any temptation to advance ſome ſtrange paradoxes, that he advanced on the foundation of an aſſumed analogical knowledge, if he had confined himſelf to refute one impiety, that of the predeſtinarians, without attempting to excuſe another. Our ideas of divine intelligence and wiſdom may be neither fantaſtic nor falſe, and yet God's manner of knowing may be ſo different from ours, that foreknowledge, as we call it improperly in him, may be conſiſtent with the contingency of events, altho' that which we call properly foreknowledge in ourſelves be not ſo. But he reaſons about the eſſential natural attributes of God as if he reaſoned about thoſe that we call moral, in which way of reaſoning there is great and manifeſt error. The former are fixed, uniform, and ſpecific natures, that want no equivalent; and that are certainly adequate, ſince the mighty effects that are produced proceed from them. They may be perceived more or leſs in different caſes, but in no caſe will they vary, even in appearance and in human apprehenſion, from what they are. Like the ſun, they may appear ſometimes in the full effulgence of their brightneſs, and ſometimes behind thoſe clouds which the eye of human reaſon cannot pierce. But ſtill, like the light and heat of the ſun, tho' differently perceived, they will appear the ſame. The latter are not ſuch fixed, uniform, ſpecific natures to human apprehenſion. They are rather aſſumed nominal

nominal natures, not manifeſted by God in his government of the world as clearly and as determinately, as the phyſical attributes of wiſdom and power are in the whole ſyſtem of his works; but framed into abſtract general notions by the human mind to help itſelf in the moral conſideration of human actions, and applied to the Supreme Being that we may reaſon more diſtinctly, if not more truly, about his nature, and the diſpenſations of his providence. We ought to attribute all conceivable perfections, without doubt, to the ſupreme all-perfect Being. We can never raiſe our conceptions of this kind too high. They will remain, after all our efforts, vaſtly inadequate. Nay if we ſuppoſe them leſs ſo, or puſh abſurdity to the utmoſt and ſuppoſe them adequate, yet ſtill they will remain very inſufficient criterions by which to judge in many caſes, as men preſume to do in all, of theſe perfections in the exerciſe of them. The reaſon is plain. God acts according to a multitude of relations unknown to us. He acts relatively to his ſyſtem, we judge relatively to ours.

Into ſuch oppoſite paradoxes are divines tranſported by preſumptuous reaſoning and whimſical refinements, whilſt they pretend to teach us the knowledge of God and of heavenly things, that ſome of them affirm dogmatically, and without any regard to truth, which they ſacrifice readily to maintain an hypotheſis, that the moral attributes are in God juſt what they are in our inadequate, fluctuating ideas, and that God himſelf appeals to man for his proceeding conformably to them: and ſome again are ſo far from falling into this, that they fall into a contrary extreme, and would perſuade us that the attributes of God are all alike inconceivable to us as they are in themſelves, and can be known no way except by analogy; which is not to know them at all: for knowledge, which reſts in analogy, ſtops ſhort, and is not knowledge.

The firſt of theſe opinions has done infinite hurt to all religion, and has turned it into ſuperſtition every where, and in every age. The laſt has not been of much ſervice to chriſtianity, as I apprehend; and ſure I am that it will leave the objection, made to the jewiſh ſcriptures on account of the images under which they repreſent the Supreme Being, juſt where they find it.

Here let us draw one line of ſeparation, among others, between natural and artificial theology. By that we are taught to acknowledge and adore the infinite wiſdom and power of God, which he has manifeſted to us, in ſome degree or other, in every part, even the moſt minute, of his creation. By that too we are taught to aſcribe goodneſs and juſtice to him wherever he intended that we ſhould ſo aſcribe them, that is, wherever either his works, or the diſpenſations of his providence do as neceſſarily communicate theſe notions to our minds, as thoſe of wiſdom and power are communicated to us in the whole extent of both. Wherever they are not ſo communicated, we may aſſume very reaſonably that it is on motives ſtrictly conformable to all the divine attributes, and therefore to goodneſs and juſtice, tho' unknown to us, from whom ſo many circumſtances, with a relation to which the divine providence acts, muſt be often concealed; or we may reſolve all ſuch caſes into the wiſdom of God, and, reſigning ourſelves to that, not preſume to account for them morally. Thus we follow God, and pretend to have knowledge of his moral character, no further than he gives it; no further than theſe abſtract or general notions, which we collect from the proceedings of his providence, are confirmed by the ſame.

LXXV.

BUT we are taught a very different leſſon in the ſchools of artificial theology. In them all the notions of thoſe obligations, under which men lie to one another by the conſtitution of their nature, are transferred to GOD; and an imaginary connection between his phyſical and moral attributes is framed by very precarious reaſonings à priori; all of which are founded on that impertinent ſuppoſition, that moral fitneſſes and unfitneſſes are known, by the eternal reaſon of things, to all rational beings as well as to GOD. They go further. As GOD is perfect, and man very imperfect, they talk of his infinite goodneſs and juſtice as of his infinite wiſdom and power, tho' the latter may preſerve their nature without any conceivable bounds, and the former muſt ceaſe to be what they are, unleſs we conceive them bounded. Their nature implies neceſſarily a limitation in the exerciſe of them. Thus then the moral attributes, according to this theology, require infinitely more of GOD to man, than men are able, or would be obliged, if they were able, to exerciſe to one another; greater profuſion in beſtowing benefits and rewards, greater rigor in puniſhing offences. This whole ſyſtem of GOD's moral obligations, or of divine ethics, being raiſed à priori, and not à poſteriori, is a ſyſtem of the duty of GOD to man: let the blaſphemy of this expreſſion be charged to the account of thoſe who make it proper and neceſſary to be uſed, in order to expoſe their doctrine. It is a ſyſtem of what he ought, or is obliged by his attributes to do; and not a ſcheme of what he has done. It preſcribes to GOD, and the diſpenſations of his providence are acquitted or cenſured as they are conformable or not conformable to it.

The makers of this ſyſtem have gone ſtill further, and have attributed to the Divinity not only the perfections, but the imperfections of humanity. Superſtition improved by philoſophy ſucceeded that which was rude and unſyſtematiſed; and learning and knowledge finiſhed what ignorance had begun. When they ſaw that the conſtitution of things, and the order of providence did not anſwer the notions of goodneſs and juſtice in all the extent, in which they thought it was fit to aſcribe theſe notions to a Supreme Being, contrary notions ſtood ready to take the place of theſe; and, ſince they could not aſcribe them all to one, they aſcribed them to ſeveral divinities. From hence a good and an evil god, the ditheiſm of philoſophers. From hence that univerſal polytheiſm, a principal uſe of which was to account for the phænomena of nature, and for the government of the moral world. The moral characters of pagan divinities differed, like the moral characters of men; and, to make theſe characters complete, the ſame paſſions were aſcribed to both: one nation, nay one man was favored by one god, another by another; and as there were parties on earth, there were parties in heaven. But here we muſt diſtinguiſh between the theology of the jews and that of other nations. The jews, with more inconſiſtency and not leſs profanation, dreſſed up the one Supreme Being in all the rags of humanity; which compoſed a kind of motley character, ſuch as fooliſh ſuperſtition, and mad enthuſiaſm alone could aſcribe to him, and ſuch as no man, who believes him to be an all-perfect Being, can hear without horror.

The moſt barbarous nations had the moſt barbarous deities generally, and the gods ſeem to have been civiliſed no faſter, than their adorers were, and even not ſo faſt, nor in the ſame proportion: for we know by experience, that ſuperſtition can

maintain barbarity in religious policy, among thoſe who are the furtheſt from it in civil. The antient Chineſe, it is ſaid, repreſented the Supreme Being, the lord of heaven and earth, for ſo they called him, as the giver of all good *, as an object of adoration and of gratitude, to whom their emperors offered up the firſt fruits of the corn they had ſowed with their own hands. But the antient nations, of whom the hiſtories and traditions with which we are better acquainted ſpeak, repreſented the divine nature like that of their own tyrants. The divine favor was to be obtained by importunate ſupplications, by magnificent preſents, and by all the external ſhew of ſervice, and pomp of adulation. Their gods too, like their tyrants, were prone to anger, and hard to be appeaſed. Nothing leſs than bloody ſacrifices of beaſts, of men, of children, could appeaſe them; and the notion of rendering them propitious by putting other creatures to death being eſtabliſhed, we are not to wonder, if the greateſt offenders grew the moſt devout. In this reſpect they had better quarter from gods than men, tho' SENECA ſays, that it coſt more to aſſuage the wrath of their gods, than the rage of their tyrants, "ut ſic dii placentur quemadmodum ne homines "quidem ſæviunt."

IF we would own the truth, we ſhould be obliged to own that this kind of propitiation is much more repugnant to all our notions of juſtice, than any of thoſe inſtances of ſuppoſed injuſtice which divines and atheiſts charge on GOD; and yet it continued to be the conſtant practice of the jews at the ſame time as they boaſt that GOD was their king, and relate the terrible judgments that he executed, and that they executed by his command, or with his approbation, perſonally on one another, and perſonally for their own ſakes on other

* Scien. Sin.

people.

people. Thus they blended together at once, in the moral character of GOD, injuſtice, cruelty, and partiality. They made him an object of terror more, than of awe and reverence, and their religion was a ſyſtem of the rankeſt ſuperſtition; for nothing can be more true, than what St. AUSTIN quotes ſomewhere from VARRO, that they who are religious revere, and the ſuperſtitious fear GOD *. The ſaint would have done well to have applied this true maxim to certain abominable doctrines of his own, and to have learned from an heathen to correct his own theology. But the truth is, that chriſtianity preſerved in many reſpects a ſtrong tang of the ſpirit of judaiſm, as judaiſm had taken, and incorporated in the firſt inſtitution of it, many of the rites and obſervances at leaſt of Ægypt: for I will not ſay that the legiſlator, who was inſtructed in all the wiſdom of the Ægyptians, took the belief of one GOD from the doctrine of the Theban dynaſty, as different in that reſpect from the polytheiſm of the other Ægyptians, as that of the jews was; tho' I might ſuſpect that he did ſo much more reaſonably, than a very able writer inſinuates that the jews might inſtruct other nations in the moſt excellent philoſophy, and that natural religion was originally built on the religion revealed to them †. The ceremonies of the law of MOSES in the worſhip of GOD were retrenched, and a more inward devotion, a more reaſonable ſervice were eſtabliſhed: tho' even this devotion and this ſervice retained an air of that enthuſiaſm which prevailed among the prophets, or preachers of the jewiſh church, on whom the ſpirit of GOD was ſuppoſed to deſcend. The Supreme Being took a milder appearance ſeveral ways among chriſtians. His favor was confined no longer to one people; all mankind were conſtrued

* VARRO ait, Deum a religioſo vereri, a ſuperſtitioſo timeri.
† Vid. Def. of revealed Rel. by CONYB. p. 406.

by this new theology to be of the ſeed of ABRAHAM, and they were all included in the new covenant. The Meſſiah came, and GOD did for fallen man what he would not do for fallen angels, according to a remark of archbiſhop TILLOTSON. He ſent his only ſon, who is one and the ſame GOD with himſelf, into the world to ſuffer an ignominious death, and by that ſacrifice to redeem all the ſons of ADAM from the conſequences of his wrath, which the ſin of ADAM had entailed on the whole race of mankind. Chriſtian theology diſcovers in this myſterious proceeding, the love of GOD to man, his infinite juſtice and goodneſs. But reaſon will diſcover the fantaſtical, confuſed, and inconſiſtent notions of jewiſh theology latent in it, and applied to another ſyſtem of religion. This love will appear partiality, as great as that which the jews aſſumed that he had ſhewn in preferring their nation to all the nations of the earth. This juſtice will appear injuſtice in all the circumſtances of the fall, and in the redemption of man by the propitiatory ſacrifice of an innocent perſon. This goodneſs will appear cruelty when it is conſidered that the propitiation was made by tormenting, and ſpilling the blood of the victim; and in ſhort injuſtice and cruelty will appear inconſiſtently united in this circumſtance, that mankind could not have been redeemed if the jews had received, inſtead of crucifying the Meſſiah; and yet that they were rejected then, and have been puniſhed ever ſince, for not receiving, and for crucifying him.

ON the whole, the moral character imputed to the Supreme Being by chriſtian theology differs little from that imputed to him by the jewiſh. The difference is rather apparent than real, and if the effects of ſudden and violent anger are imputed to him in one ſyſtem, thoſe of ſlow and ſilent revenge are imputed to him in the other. The GOD of the Old Teſtament rewards and puniſhes viſibly, and ſignally here:

he terrifies often by his anger, he reforms ſometimes. The GOD of the New, makes little difference here between thoſe whom he approves, and thoſe whom he diſapproves; ſo little that he is charged with injuſtice for it: but he lies in wait to puniſh the latter hereafter with unrelenting vengeance and eternal torments, when it is too late to terrify, becauſe it is too late to reform. Divines would be therefore under a double obligation to reconcile theſe paſſions to the idea of an all-perfect Being, if that was poſſible. But becauſe it is impoſſible, they take the part of denying, againſt the expreſs terms of their ſcriptures, that he has any ſuch paſſions. They quote contradictory paſſages, which were deſigned *, they ſay, to make us underſtand that theſe repreſentations are imperfect, and to keep us from imagining that the things ſpoken of are in the ſame manner in GOD, in which any of theſe paſſages expreſs them: as if inconſiſtency could preſerve from error, or be an excuſe for it. They ſay very truly, that it would be abſurd to underſtand the repreſentations literally: but they argue very precariouſly, when they conclude from thence that they were not intended to be ſo underſtood. Is it leſs repugnant to human reaſon to aſcribe the human paſſions to the divine nature, than it is to impute to GOD many other things which our theology imputes to him? I recall them not in particular. This only I will ſay, and you muſt own, that it cannot be hard to conceive, how the jews and the firſt chriſtians came to entertain ſuch abſurd notions, by any man, who conſiders that in the moſt enlightened ages, and at this hour, the greateſt part of the chriſtian church believes that the ſame propitiatory ſacrifice, which CHRIST offered upon the croſs, is daily offered up for the living and the dead on ten thouſand altars at once, and that they eat, and drink the very ſame body and blood. Well

* Archb. KING. ubi. ſup.

might

might the jews and the firſt chriſtians believe in contradiction to their reaſon, when an infinite number of learned men, and great philoſophers believe in contradiction to their reaſon and their ſenſes both.

We have obſerved above how this noſtrum of analogy is applied to purge off the literal meaning of thoſe paſſages which aſcribe to God the form of man. Like a mountebank's panacæa, it will have no better ſucceſs when it is applied to purify thoſe that aſcribe the human paſſions to him. Archbiſhop King *, for I think it worth my while to quote no other writer in favor of analogy, anſwers the objection made to this doctrine, " that if it be true all religion may be loſt in " mere figures," by ſaying " that there is great difference " between this analogy and what we call figure. That the " uſe of the laſt is to repreſent things, otherwiſe well known, " ſo as to magnify, or leſſen the ideas we have of them, to " move our paſſions, and to engage our fancies; by which " means they are often employed to deceive us. But that " the uſe of divine analogy is to give us notions of things " where we can have no direct knowledge." Now it ſeems to me that analogy is figure, or it is nothing; and that, if it is figure, it is of the kind of thoſe which are employed to deceive us. The uſe of figure is not only to illuſtrate, and adorn things known, but to help our conceptions, and to introduce things knowable into the mind. When it is not employed to any of theſe purpoſes, to the firſt by orators and poets, or to the laſt by philoſophers, figurative ſtyle is ſilly, unmeaning talk, or it is impoſition, and fraud. We may be deceived by it, no doubt; but we cannot be deceived long, if the uſe of it be confined to things that are knowable by us. He

* Ubi ſup.

who

who is not able to tell us without any figure, what he means by the figure he employs, will neither deſerve, nor have the attention of men of ſenſe; and, beſides, in matters that are knowable by us, we may diſcover the propriety, or impropriety of it by our own reſearches.

THE caſe of analogy is very different. It is a ſimilitude, or reſemblance of an object with ſome diverſity, as the ſchoolmen ſay very intelligibly. But then the aſſertors of it ſay, that this object is not to be known otherwiſe by us, and that we muſt be content to know it this way, or not at all. If this aſſumed divine analogy differs from other figures, therefore, it differs in this, they cannot deceive long, this may deceive always. No, ſays theology: it never can deceive, becauſe theſe analogical notions of the divine nature are communicated to us by GOD himſelf in his word. But who does not ſee, that this falls into the abſurdity mentioned above? A theiſt doubts of the authenticity of this word, becauſe ſuch notions are contained in it. A divine juſtifies the notions, becauſe they are contained in it. To want external proof ſufficient to conſtitute this authenticity, and to have internal proof turned againſt it, would be too much. The weaker the former is, the more neceſſary it becomes to defend the latter. But then it is defended by ſo many arbitrary aſſumptions, and forced interpretations, that a bible, without a comment, can be reconciled neither to itſelf, nor to what we know of phyſical and moral nature; and that, with a comment, it is in a multitude of inſtances the word of man, rather than the word of GOD. There are not only things myſteriouſly, but things untruly expreſſed in it. In one caſe, GOD has ſo little regard to the weakneſs of our capacities, that his language is far above all human conception: in the other, it deſcends to that of the moſt illiterate ages, and of the moſt ignorant people among whom

theſe ſcriptures were writ, compiled, or publiſhed. In the former, we are told that he deſigns to exerciſe our faith, which is the angular ſtone of every inſtituted religion: in the latter, that he was pleaſed to ſpeak according to vulgar error, that he might be the better underſtood; as if the ſupreme intelligence, the God of truth, could ſtand in need of an expedient to which no philoſopher would think himſelf reduced.

LXXVI.

IT is ſtrange to obſerve that ſuch a writer, as archbiſhop King, ſhould recommend his favorite analogy as the proper and neceſſary, the uſual and general method of teaching and inſtructing mankind, and of leading them to knowledge, after he has aſſumed over and over, that all our knowledge of the divine nature and perfections reſts on theſe notions ſolely, and can be carried no further. When we are inſtructed by analogy, by compariſon, by figure in one word, on other occaſions, it is in order to arrive at the knowledge of matters knowable. Knowledge that was to reſt in theſe, would not be deemed knowledge, nor even that which we might think we acquired by reaſoning from them; for demonſtration cannot ariſe from real and much leſs from aſſumed ſimilitude nor figure. It muſt be eſtabliſhed on intuitive, or ſenſitive knowledge. The reaſon is obvious. Similitudes may be aſſumed, and figures employed falſely. We muſt go beyond them, and reaſon independently of them, to know whether they lead us to truth, or not; for the anger of God may be as improper an image, as that of his hands and feet, and there may be, as doubtleſs there is, in one repreſentation no more proportion, nor reſemblance, than in the other. Analogy conſiſts of ſome ſimilitude and ſome diverſity. As faſt as we perceive this ſi-

ſimilitude and this diverſity, it may help us to prove; but of itſelf, and without this compariſon, which cannot be made when the object is unknown, it can neither prove, nor help us to prove. The right reverend author I have quoted ſo often is fond of an example or two, one of which turns againſt him, and the other makes nothing for him.

To the man, who is a ſtranger to any country, we produce a map of it. The map is only paper and ink. It is not the country, it has very little likeneſs to the country; yet this analogy gives him notions, and as much knowledge of the country as ſerves his preſent purpoſe. Now in the firſt place, tho' it be true that the map gives him the notion of a new country, it is equally true that the map gives him no new notion. He knew what mountains, and valleys, and lakes, and rivers are, before he ſaw the map; and all he learns by it is, that there are ſuch in this unknown country: ſo that the compariſon ſhews, much againſt the intention of the writer, if it ſhews any thing, that the human paſſions with which we were acquainted long before the analogical map was ſpread before us, are the ſame in God that they are in us. The ſtrokes and lines of the map do not ſhew us Highgate, nor the Thames; the mountains may be higher, the rivers deeper, but they are mountains and rivers ſtill, and the nature and the face of the country are much the ſame. In the next place, the map was made by perſons who had been on the ſpot, or by the communication of exact memorials from them, and they to whom it is of the utmoſt conſequence to know this knowable country may reſort to it, and verify or correct the map, inſtead of truſting to men who know the country no better than they do, or who may ha ve an intereſt to deceive them.

ANOTHER example is taken from our ſenſitive knowledge of outward objects. The ſun, for inſtance, gives us by his effects the ideas of light and heat; but what they are in themſelves, or what the phyſical nature of the ſun is, we know not. Juſt ſo, the direction of GOD's providence in the government of the world gives us the ideas of anger and revenge; but what theſe are in themſelves, or what the moral nature of GOD is, we know not. This compariſon may ſeem plauſible perhaps to ſome perſons. But it will not hold. Whatever light and heat are in themſelves, the ſimple ideas that we diſtinguiſh by theſe names are raiſed by the action of the ſun immediately, and uniformly. But the complex ideas of anger and revenge are not ſo raiſed by any act, or direction of providence. Diſagreeable ſenſations, or pain, may be immediate effects of ſuch acts or directions; but the moral cauſes of theſe are of our own invention. They are not uniformly aſſigned neither, as they are not immediately, nor determinately known; for the ſame appearances which are aſcribed to GOD's anger or revenge by one man, and at one time, will be aſcribed to his juſtice, or even to his mercy, by another man at the ſame time, or by the ſame man at another time. In all theſe caſes, the phyſical cauſes are alike unknown in themſelves, and in the manner of their operations. They are determined only by their effects. Now to argue, that, becauſe we admit theſe, which are ſo determined, we ought to admit moral cauſes, which are not ſo determined, is ſomething too ſophiſtical. To conclude this head by bringing an example againſt analogy much more to the purpoſe, than thoſe that are brought in favor of it: the man who was born blind imagined, moſt analogically, a ſimilitude between the ſound of a trumpet, and the ſcarlet color. He ſubſtituted the idea he had for that he had not, and reaſoned from thence juſt as well about

ſcarlet,

ſcarlet, as ſome men reaſon from their ideas of anger and revenge about the moral cauſes that are latent in the divine mind.

It is ſaid that we can have no direct knowledge of the nature of God: which is true in this ſenſe, that all the knowledge we can have of this kind is derived originally from his works, and the proceedings of his providence. All the ways of acquiring a more direct knowledge by architypal ideas which we diſcern in an intimate union of the human with the divine mind, by the irradiations of myſtic theology, or by the inward light of quakeriſm, and ſeveral more, which the phrenzy of metaphyſics, not very diſtant from that of enthuſiaſm, has invented, are too ridiculous to deſerve the regard of common ſenſe. But tho' we have not, in any of theſe ways, a direct knowledge of the nature of God, yet we are not reduced to know nothing of him except by analogy. If the firſt principles of our knowledge concerning him be reflected, as we have juſt now ſaid, yet it is real. It is carried into demonſtration, and is therefore direct likewiſe, if we may be allowed to call any knowledge by demonſtration direct. What we can ſee of him within the extent of our horizon, we ſee clearly. He judged this ſufficient for us, he gave us to ſee no further by that lamp of reaſon which he has lighted up in our minds; and with this, little as it is, we ought to be content. But the divines, ſpoken of here, light up their dim taper of analogy, pretend to ſhew us the ſhadows of objects they cannot diſcover, and bid us be content with this. They go further. They aſſert that this is ſufficient for us, and tho' true religion be the moſt reaſonable ſervice, they make it the moſt unreaſonable ſervitude: for thus they argue *. "Men ho- "nor and obey a prince whom they never ſaw, and whom

* King, ubi ſup.

" they could not diſtinguiſh from another man, if they met " him. Let us ſuppoſe GOD to be ſuch a prince literally, as " he is repreſented analogically. Let us ſuppoſe him to love " thoſe that obey his orders, and to be in rage and fury againſt " the diſobedient. Can we doubt that he who believes this " will be ſaved by virtue of that belief?" Thus you ſee that they make at laſt even their own analogy unneceſſary. We may conceive him, by their leave, under all the groſs and repugnant images that have been employed to repreſent him in the jewiſh ſcriptures. We may conceive him to be a mighty king, that ſits in heaven, and has the earth for his footſtool, from whence all things that can happen are in his view. Or we may conceive him, like an eaſtern monarch, carried about in his palanquin, neither ſeeing his ſubjects, nor ſeen by them, familiar with a few of his favorites, terrible to all the reſt of his people, and known only by the pomp with which he is ſerved, and by the ſeverity of his government *. The man who thinks that every circumſtance in the moſaical hiſtory of the creation and of the fall is to be underſtood literally, ſhould think, indeed, that every repreſentation which the ſcriptures make of GOD is to be underſtood in the ſame manner; ſince there can be no reaſon given againſt interpreting ſome of theſe circumſtances literally, and ſome figuratively, that will not hold againſt interpreting ſome of theſe paſſages one way, and ſome another. To be conſiſtent, he ſhould diſclaim the analogy he contends for; and then nothing more will be wanting to anſwer all the ends of artificial theology, than to aſſume on ſuch premiſes, that they who miniſter in holy things are the omrahs, the vizirs, and the baſſas of this mighty king, whoſe commands they publiſh, interpret, and execute, or cauſe to be executed; rather than his ambaſſadors: by aſſuming

* Vid. KING in his ſerm. on Gen. ii. 16, 17.

which latter character they may ſeem to leſſen over modeſtly the dignity of their own order, and to raiſe that of the laity too high.---But I am aſhamed to have ſaid ſo much on this ſubject.

LXXVII.

I MIGHT have concluded ſooner, that an analogy arbitrarily aſſumed is not ſufficient to excuſe the literal attribution of thoſe human paſſions to the divine nature, which are the diſgrace of ours; that there is little or no difference in reality between one and the other of theſe attributions, whatever there may be in appearance, to an inattentive or prejudiced mind; and that anger and revenge were aſcribed by the jews to the Supreme Being as literally as compaſſion and mercy, as literally as injuſtice in this life is aſcribed to his providence by atheiſts and divines, or the juſtice of it in another is aſſerted by the latter. The falſe conceptions, and the licentious reaſonings about the divine nature and providence, that have been mentioned, as well as many more, proceed chiefly from the doctrine which teaches that the moral attributes are the ſame in GOD as they are in our ideas, that the eternal reaſon of things, by which he acts, is open to all rational beings; and conſequently that we are competent judges of his moral proceedings towards us, ſince we are competent to determine what his moral character requires. But theſe falſe conceptions and licentious reaſonings may proceed likewiſe from the analogical doctrine, as contrary as it appears to the other; for by aſcribing to GOD not human notions and paſſions, but ſomething, whatever it be, equivalent to theſe, KING might, tho' he does not, reaſon as dogmatically as CLARKE, à priori, from what the creator and governor of the world ought to do in

in thoſe qualities, to what he has done which is condemned, and to what they aſſume he will do which is juſtified, and rendered his ſole juſtification. On ſuch conceptions, and ſuch reaſonings, the doctrine of future rewards and puniſhments has been eſtabliſhed, as it is ſtill taught. Had it been taught in terms more general, and leſs deſcriptive, had the puniſhments been repreſented, for inſtance, like the rewards, to be ſimply ſuch as eye never ſaw, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man could conceive; it might have been maintained in credit, and have had an univerſal and real influence perhaps, to the great advantage of religion, even ſince the days of ſuperſtition and ignorance were over. But beſides the abſurdity of ſuppoſing that GOD inflicts eternal puniſhments on his creatures, which would render their non-exiſtence infinitely preferable to their exiſtence on the whole, as every one who has not the rage of paradoxes about him muſt admit; I apprehend that an air of ridicule has been caſt on this doctrine by preſerving all the idle tales, and burleſque images which were propagated in thoſe days, and have been preſerved in theſe by the united labors of nurſes, pedagogues, painters, poets, and grave divines. I need not enumerate inſtances. They are enough known, and they have done ſo much to take off the ſolemnity, and to weaken the authority of this doctrine, that the man, who was induced to diſbelieve a GOD by ſerious and pathetic diſcourſes againſt his goodneſs and juſtice in the government of this world, would be hardly reclaimed to theiſm by an hypotheſis which reſembles ſo nearly that mythologia de inferis he had laughed at ſo often.

SINCE our divines have thought fit to riſque the belief of an all-perfect Being, the creator and governor of all beings, on this hypotheſis, they ſhould have made it at leaſt as plauſible to the reaſon of mankind, as their objections are made

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in ſome degree to his reaſon, tho' much more to his affections and paſſions; and on which they have appealed, in concert with the atheiſts, to this reaſon, and even to experience. They ſhould not have ſhewn themſelves ſo much more concerned for this hypotheſis, than for the fundamental demonſtrated principle of all religion, as to make, if they could, the hypotheſis paſs in ſome ſort for the demonſtration, and the demonſtration for the hypotheſis. They do little leſs when they attempt to prove that there is no GOD, if there is no future ſtate; inſtead of inſiſting that ſince there is a GOD there may be a future ſtate. The ſtoics aſſerted *, that if there was a GOD, there was divination; and if there was divination, there was a GOD. "Reciprocantur iſta: ſi divinatio ſit dii ſunt; ſi "dii ſint, divinatio eſt." TULLY might have added in their name, "ſi divinatio non ſit, nec dii ſunt." But the heathen philoſopher was on this occaſion a better theiſt, than ſuch a chriſtian divine as CLARKE.

ANOTHER obſervation equally true, but not quite ſo obvious, requires to have it's place here, and to be a little more developed. Natural religion is that original revelation which GOD has made of himſelf, and of his will, to all mankind, in the conſtitution of things, and in the order of his providence. Whatever is thus revealed is within the reach of our faculties; and the ſame reaſon which he has given us to improve the phyſical, he has given us to improve the moral ſyſtem of our lives. Neither of them is improved equally; of which many apparent cauſes, and ſome that would be thought perhaps too refined and too hypothetical, may be aſſigned. But they who apply their reaſon the moſt to theſe improvements, provide the beſt for their own well-being both here and hereafter on the ſuppoſition of a future ſtate. It would not be hard to ſhew

* TULLY De divin.

one leſs inſtructed than you are, that human reaſon is able to diſcover, in this original revelation, every conceivable duty that we owe to GOD as our creator, and to man as our fellow-creature. It would be eaſy to ſhew that this ſyſtem of duty is fully proportioned by infinite wiſdom to the human ſtate, and to the end of it, human happineſs. Natural religion is therefore relatively perfect; and if it was ſo unrelatively, it would be very imperfect. It is therefore immutable as long as GOD and man continue to be what they are, as long as we ſtand in the ſame relations to him, and to one another. GOD cannot change; and to ſuppoſe that the relations of mankind to him, or to one another, may, or have changed, is to aſſume arbitrarily, and without any proof, that can be urged in a diſputation of this kind. If it does not follow neceſſarily from hence, ſure I am it follows probably, that GOD has made no other revelation of himſelf, and of his will to mankind. I do not aſſert that he has made no ſuch particular revelations, as I did not preſume to aſſert that there are never any particular interpoſitions of his providence: but this I will aſſert, that if he has made any ſuch, the original and univerſal revelation muſt be the foundation, and the criterion of them all. Let it be, for argument's ſake, that GOD, who knew from all eternity what the ſtate of mankind and of every ſociety of man would be at every point of time, determined to deal out his revelations by parcels, as legiſlators are forced to make new laws, and new rules of government that are adapted to circumſtances unforeſeen by them; inſtead of making a ſyſtem of moral law, when he created moral agents, that might anſwer his whole purpoſe in all circumſtances of time, place, and perſons; juſt as he made a phyſical ſyſtem of laws for the other part, the inanimate part of his creation. Let this be aſſumed, for argument's ſake, tho' it be not in any degree ſo agreeable to the notions of infinite knowledge and wiſdom as the contrary

trary opinion: it muſt be aſſumed at the ſame time, that there is nothing in any of theſe poſterior revelations inconſiſtent with the firſt, even in appearance, and to our apprehenſions; or it muſt be aſſumed that GOD himſelf, the ſupreme wiſdom, is inconſiſtent, or gives occaſion to his rational creatures to think that he is ſo.

I reaſon very unwillingly, and not without a certain awe on my mind, when I preſume to ſpeak of what GOD may, or may not do, as familiar as this practice is to many. But if it be free from preſumption in any caſe, it is ſo when we endeavor to expoſe that of ſuch men as theſe, and may be ſaid rather to refute their doctrines, than to advance dogmatically any of our own. I ſpeak in this manner when I ſay, agreeably to the moſt clear and diſtinct ideas I can frame, that as GOD, the ſupreme truth and reaſon, can neither pronounce nor imply any thing that is falſe, or abſurd, in condeſcenſion to our capacities; ſo he will, in condeſcenſion to theſe capacities, make no revelation to us by his word, which ſhall be even in appearance, and to human apprehenſion, inconſiſtent with what he has revealed of himſelf, and of his will by his works. This revelation, and all that is contained clearly in it, is an object of knowledge. Other revelations which we aſſume to be made by his word, and which we receive on the word of man, are objects of belief. Now it would be repugnant to the divine wiſdom that he ſhould perplex our knowledge in one caſe, or weaken our belief in the other, by ſuggeſting inconſiſtent ideas of his nature, or his will. You will have learned, perhaps, to ſay that things, which appear in a poſterior revelation inconſiſtent with the firſt, would not appear ſuch, if we could comprehend them clearly and fully. But you will unlearn this leſſon, if you conſider that the common diſtinction, of things contrary to reaſon, and things above it, cannot be

employed, on this occaſion, to any purpoſe that will avail. If things contained in any aſſumed revelation are inconſiſtent with the religion of nature, they are moſt certainly contrary to reaſon, ſince the religion of nature is collected by reaſon from the known conſtitution and relations of things, and from the known order of providence. They are therefore to be rejected. If the things contained in any ſuch revelation be above reaſon, that is, incomprehenſible, I do not ſay in their manner of being, for that alone would not make them liable to this objection, but in themſelves, and according to the terms wherein they are communicated; there is no criterion left by which to judge whether they are agreeable, or repugnant to the religion of nature and of reaſon. They are not, therefore, to be received: and he who inſiſts that they ſhould be received independently of this criterion, falls into the abſurdity already mentioned. He ſuppoſes them reconcileable to the original revelation God has made in his works, becauſe they are contained in his word; whereas it is incumbent on him to ſhew that theſe very things are ſo many internal proofs of the authenticity of this revelation, by ſhewing that they are all reconcileable to the other. Divines themſelves agree to this, or they mean nothing, when they take ſo much pains to reconcile them to it, in order to conclude, according to their uſual method, that a thing is, whenever they imagine they have proved that it may be, or have ſaid enough to make others believe ſo.

It has been made a queſtion, whether God can, conſiſtently with his goodneſs, his juſtice, or even with his wiſdom, give ſuch ſecondary revelations as are aſſumed on particular occaſions, or without any occaſion and ſufficient reaſon for them; and whether he can, conſiſtently with the ſame attributes, after leaving his human creatures for a great number of

ages under the law of their nature, by which nothing but morality was preſcribed, and nothing but immorality forbid, impoſe new and poſitive precepts, the precepts of mere will? The queſtion has been agitated with equal preſumption on both ſides, perhaps; and certainly with much ſophiſm, and more evaſion than argument, on one ſide. I enter not into it. I ſtand on the ground I have already made, and inſiſt, that the law of our nature is perfect, relatively to our ſyſtem, and muſt be immutable as long as this ſyſtem continues. I inſiſt, therefore, that it cannot be altered: but I may admit, for the point is not clear enough to oblige me to it neceſſarily, that things entirely and exactly conſiſtent with it may be ſuperadded to it by the ſame divine authority, tho' not in a manner equally authentic; and that poſitive precepts may be given about things which are indifferent by the law of our nature, partaking neither of morality nor immorality, and which become obligatory as ſoon as they are enjoined by ſuch poſitive precepts. Notwithſtanding theſe conceſſions it will remain true, that every inſtituted religion is dependent on natural religion, and ſhould be made ſubſervient to it.

THEY all boaſt that they are ſo, but experience ſhews that the very contrary is true. They conſiſt chiefly of articles of faith that go far beyond all the knowledge we can acquire; and of external rites, ceremonies, and poſitive duties, that have no relation to thoſe of the moral kind, which are all included in the precepts of natural religion. Now it is true in fact, that to believe theſe articles of faith, and to practiſe theſe external duties, are reputed in all theſe religions the moſt eſſential parts of them: ſo that a good man and a devout man may be always different, and are often oppoſite characters; ſo oppoſite, that I ſuſpect no two characters would be found, if they could be nicely examined, in a great number of perſons

to go together ſo ſeldom. This might be exemplified in many inſtances, but in none more ſtrongly than in that of the jews. No nation ſo exact in obſerving faſts and feaſts, and ſo ſuperſtitiouſly zealous in the practice of every ceremony of a law that abounded with ceremonies. But no nation ſo unhoſpitable at the ſame time, no people ſo uncharitable, nor ſo abſolutely ſtrangers to that fundamental principle of natural religion, univerſal benevolence.

LXXVIII.

IT were much to be wiſhed that the ſame reproach could not be made in any degree to the profeſſors of chriſtianity. But I apprehend that they too muſt paſs condemnation on this head. The doctrine of a future ſtate of rewards and puniſhments was eſtabliſhed, no doubt, in the chriſtian, as in every other ſyſtem of inſtituted religion, to enforce natural, that is, the firſt, the moſt authentic, and as we may ſay the miſtreſs of all religions, ſince they ſhould be all ſubſervient to her. But this doctrine is applied, in every communion of chriſtians, as much to enforce matters of metaphyſical ſpeculation, or poſitive duties, or forms of worſhip, which are neither parts of natural religion, nor have any neceſſary connection with our moral obligations, as it is applied to enforce theſe. The miſtreſs is ſet on a level with the ſervant, and the ſame regard is paid to one as to the other. But why do I ſay the ſame, when it is manifeſt that much more regard is paid in many inſtances, and in the application we ſpeak of here particularly, to the latter than to the former? Metaphyſical ſpeculations, poſitive duties, and forms of worſhip can have no merit any further than they contribute to maintain, and improve in our minds an awful ſenſe of the majeſty of

the Supreme Being, of our dependence on him, of our duties to him, and of the moral obligations under which we lye to our fellow-creatures: and as far as they contribute to theſe purpoſes, whether they are of human or of divine inſtitution, they have great merit, and are of great importance. Their merit and their importance, however, cannot be equal to thoſe of the religion they are deſigned to maintain and improve: and yet we find them treated by the doctors and profeſſors of chriſtianity as if they had more of both, as if this part of inſtituted religion could be ſubſtituted in the place of that part of it which republiſhes natural religion, and could ſupply the want of it.

The clergy, who have taken the diſtribution of future rewards and puniſhments into their own hands, diſtribute them according to this rule. The man who has been a bad ſon, a bad huſband, a bad father, a bad citizen, who has paſſed his whole life in the practice of private and public immorality, languiſhes on a ſick bed. Conſcious of guilt, he apprehends puniſhment, and all the terrors of hell ſtare him in the face. He repents, therefore, may ſignify in this caſe nothing more than this, he is afraid; and ſo will the moſt hardened villain be at the foot of the gallows. It is too late to amend, too late to repair the injuries he has done. The prieſt, however, who gave the terror, is called to adminiſter the comfort. The man confeſſes his ſins, makes an orthodox profeſſion of his faith, joins in the prayers that are ſaid over him, takes leave of the world with all the decorum which the diſcipline of his church requires, and dies. We are bound to believe well of this man's ſalvation, and we commit his body to the ground, "in a ſure and certain hope of his reſurrection to eternal life." The man who has paſſed his whole life in the practice of every moral virtue, and has lived up to the duties of natural religion

gion in every relation, and in every ſtation, has fulfilled by conſequence all the obligations of revealed religion, as far as the latter is deſigned to republiſh, and enforce the former. But the latter is deſigned more immediately, and preferably for another purpoſe: and therefore the hope of heaven is held out to one man, notwithſtanding his wicked life; the fear of hell is held out to another, notwithſtanding his good life, on ſeveral occaſions. Faith unimpoſed, and forms and ceremonies unpreſcribed by natural religion, may atone for the violations of it; but the ſtrict obſervance of it cannot atone, in any communion, for the want of faith even in matters that have been much diſputed among chriſtians, and that are ſo ſtill in other communions; nor for the neglect of forms and ceremonies that are of mere human inſtitution, and that have varied frequently, as all ſuch inſtitutions muſt and do vary by their own nature, and by the nature of thoſe who make, and of thoſe for whom they are made. To bring an inſtance or two, that occur to me firſt out of many. Read the creed of ATHANASIUS, and then conſider that the man we ſuppoſe in this place, who has conformed his whole life to the precepts of natural religion, and of reaſon, cannot be ſaved *, but muſt periſh without doubt everlaſtingly, unleſs he believes faithfully ſuch a rhapſody of jargon as talapoins and bonzes would be hardly brought to avow, as wants a ſufficient foundation in the goſpel, as none but factious prieſts, who meaned to divide not to unite, could have combined to propagate, and as none but the leaſt reaſonable, and the moſt implicit ſet of men could have received for truth. Conſider again, that the trite ceremony of baptiſm, inſtituted, by the heathens, practiſed by the jews, and adopted by the chriſtians, is made ſo eſſential a part of religion under the vague name of a ſacrament, that neither the moral goodneſs of men, nor the inno-

* xxxix articles.

cence

cence of children can ſecure their ſalvation, unleſs they have paſſed through this myſtical waſhing: without which, and the graces conſequent to it, the good works of the former are not pleaſant to GOD, but have the nature of ſin; and the innocence of the other is infected by that original taint which ſpread from the tranſgreſſion of ADAM, and corrupted human nature in all his poſterity.

THESE are principles of artificial theology, and ſuch is the eccleſiaſtical diſtribution of future rewards and puniſhments in all chriſtian communions. I wave deſcending into particular examples taken from the eaſt or the weſt, from your church or from mine. This difference only I would obſerve between the two laſt. You acknowledge ſtill a ſpiritual monarch, the vicar of JESUS CHRIST on earth, and an infallible judge in all matters of religion, to whom you aſcribe a ſupreme eccleſiaſtical authority. At leaſt the royaliſts prevail amongſt you, and the partiſans of ſpiritual liberty are few. We have thrown off this ridiculous but heavy yoke, and thus it is more eaſy, and therefore more frequent to impoſe new doctrines, new rites, new ceremonies in your church, than in mine; to ſave, to beatify, to ſanctify whom his holineſs pleaſes, and to pronounce as many arbitrary ſentences of damnation as he thinks fit. Thus we have ſeen the conſtitution unigenitus, that child of jeſuitical revenge, procured by fraud and maintained by tyranny, erected into a rule of faith in France, where a few years before, to ſhew the exerciſe of this power in a light as ridiculous as ſcandalous, not only propoſitions extracted from the works of JANSENIUS were condemned, but even they who did not underſtand the language in which the biſhop of Ipres writ, like the nuns of Portroyal, were required to believe, and affirm that theſe very propoſitions were contained in his writings.

SUCH

Such occaſional abuſes of the doctrine of future rewards and puniſhments, which the pope and his inferior pontiffs have applied with little regard to natural religion, and even with more regard to their artificial theology than to revealed religion, have been frequent. But there is another, which has been conſtant in all the ages of the church, and by which the clergy has raiſed exorbitant contributions on the laity. When chriſtianity appeared firſt in the world, the profeſſors of it compoſed a little, and in general a poor flock. They who had ſome ſubſtance helped to maintain thoſe who had none; alms were gathered for the ſaints, and every church had a common purſe. Like our quakers, they provided for their own poor; and, like our quakers too, the teachers and the taught made one body, one undivided ſociety. The former as well as the latter lived on what they had of their own, or on the common purſe, or on the bread they acquired by their induſtry: and, as ludicrous as it may ſeem, it may be ſaid ſeriouſly, becauſe it may be ſaid truly, that if this order of things had been preſerved among chriſtians, we might behold at this day, with great edification, ſome of my lords the biſhops working at their leiſure hours (and they have many ſuch from epiſcopal functions at leaſt) in their trades, like St. Paul. But this order of things was changed early, and the diſtinction of clergy and laity eſtabliſhed; after which the former enjoyed in their own right, or as truſtees for the poor, all that had belonged to every church in common before. When the former came by ſeveral means to be conſidered as a ſeparate ſociety under the name of the church, they appropriated the wealth, which increaſed daily, as well as the name, to themſelves; and when every church had a biſhop, the ſuperior robbed the inferior paſtors, and appropriated to himſelf what belonged

belonged to them, to his church, and to the poor; all of whom he threw on the laity to be maintained by them.

LXXIX.

THAT I may not render the deduction too long for this place, I content myself to observe further, that, as this order of men increased in outward dignity and riches, to neither of which they had any other claim than that which their own usurpations, and the bigot generosity of superstitious ages gave them, they increased in ambition and avarice. The doctrine of a future state was prostituted to serve the purposes of both; and as soon as they had persuaded the laity, that the power of tying and untying, which was given by CHRIST to his disciples, invested the clergy with a power of determining in this world the condition of men in another, heaven and hell became inexhaustible sources of ecclesiastical dominion and wealth, and were applied to little else. The man, for instance, who left his estate to the church, and to pious uses, as they are called, completed all the immoralities of his life by defrauding his family at his death. But the priest, or monk, conveyed him to heaven directly, and passports for that purpose, even of modern date, are said to have been found in the hands of the dead. The layman, who had a dispute with the church, stood exposed to the thunderbolt of excommunication, which he was prepared to believe did not only separate him from her communion here, but would deprive him of happiness hereafter; so that he might be damned eternally for withholding a tithe-pig.

It was left to the induſtry of the clergy to improve theſe advantages in their ſeveral ſtations all over the chriſtian world; and it muſt be owned that they improved them to the utmoſt of their delegated power: for being delegated, as extenſive as it was, it was circumſcribed. But that from which it was delegated, and which reſided in the ſeat of this empire, the papal power, in ſhort, knew no bounds. Caſuiſts have taught that the pope may by the fulneſs of it determine rightfully againſt right*; as if he made things good and juſt by willing them; which is, I think, the prerogative of God, but which no man, except a caſuiſt, will affirm to be that of his pretended vicar. The propoſition will ſound harſhly to your ears, how catholic ſoever they may be. But if you conſider the practice of your church, and the pretenſions of your ſovereign pontiff, you will be forced to confeſs that they can be founded on nothing leſs than the ſuppoſition of ſuch an exorbitant power as I have mentioned. There is no duty of natural, nor of revealed religion, nor of eccleſiaſtical inſtitution commonly much more reſpected than either, from the obſervation of which you may not be free by diſpenſations, in the breach of which you may not be indulged, or for the breach of which you may not be ſtill more eaſily pardoned, at a market price; and this market price was formerly ſettled and publiſhed in a book of rates, that every good chriſtian might know how much his favorite vice would coſt him. A paſſage in the goſpel ſhould have been altered on this occaſion, and men ſhould have been taught that it is more eaſy for a camel to paſs

* Ex plenitudine poteſtatis jure poteſt etiam contra jus decernere.

through

through the eye of a needle, than for a poor man to enter into the kingdom of heaven.

A caſuiſt more modeſt, and who thinks himſelf more ſubtile than the former, may alledge perhaps, for it has been alledged, that the pope has virtually the keys of heaven, ſince he has thoſe of the treaſure of the church, that treaſure of merits which cannot be exhauſted, the merits of JESUS CHRIST that are infinite, and that render therefore the reſt of the heap unneceſſary being contained in it; that the pope does not pretend to remit the debt which the ſinner owes to GOD on a balance of the account of good and evil actions, but that he pays it by aſſigning out of this treaſure as much merit as every ſinner, who applies to him, wants to entitle him to ſalvation. So father PAUL repreſents the doctrine . . . . " ri- " compenſa il debito del peccatore con aſſegnare altretanto " valor del teſoro*." Thus, it may be ſaid, the pope decrees in all theſe caſes according to a right which GOD has eſtabliſhed, and not againſt right by virtue of an aſſumed arbitrary, unlimited power. But this whimſical hypotheſis, if it could be received, would anſwer the purpoſe, for which it is invented, by halves at moſt, for there is ſomething behind much worſe than the accuſation already brought.

LXXX.

YOUR divines, as well as ours, affirm very truly of the preceptive parts, that tho' natural and revealed religion are diſtinct, yet the difference between them is not a difference

* Con. di Tren. L. i.

of oppoſition; and that the latter, which enjoins poſitive duties not enjoined by the former, enjoins none that are inconſiſtent with it. But now the ſame men, who ſay this very truly when they ſpeak of the precepts of the goſpel, ſay it very falſely when they ſpeak of the religion which their artificial theology has impoſed for chriſtianity, and which is no more like to it in ſome reſpects, than talapoiſm, bonziſm, or lamaiſm are. Some of them hold morality in ſmall account. They place all religion in the obſervation of ſuch rites and ceremonies as their church has inſtituted, and in various acts of external devotion. They have been ſpoken of already. Their whole religion is a ſyſtem of ſuperſtition, unworthy of GOD as the author, and unworthy to be believed and practiſed by rational creatures. There are thoſe again who hold morality in no account at all. Tho' GOD has given us reaſon to diſcern our moral obligations, and a freedom of will to practiſe them, on which foundation alone it can be ſaid either probably, or plauſibly, that we are accountable creatures, and have been ſuch in every age of the world; yet would there have been no ſuch thing as moral virtue, nor as good works, if CHRIST had never come into the world, according to theſe doctors: for if moral righteouſneſs was at all times alike conformable to the will of GOD, in which conformity the very nature of it conſiſts, it muſt have been at all times alike acceptable to him; at leaſt it could never be unacceptable: but we are told that it is unacceptable, unleſs it follow juſtification, unleſs it be produced by faith, by grace, by inſpiration, and a whole proceſs of myſtery. Before CHRIST, therefore, it could not be conformable to the will of GOD, it could have no merit, nay, it could have no nature, there could be no ſuch thing. This ſurely is fanaticiſm, and leads to enthuſiaſm. There are thoſe again, and of thoſe particularly I mean

mean to ſpeak in this place, who admit that there is a religion of nature and of reaſon, that is, a primitive revelation which ought to be the foundation and criterion of every other: but in fact they deny what in words they admit; for under pretence of explaining and teaching a poſterior revelation, they contradict the firſt. Their artificial theology does not only take in much of the ſuperſtition, and fanaticiſm that have been mentioned, but impoſes for doctrines and precepts of chriſtianity, and enforces by the ſanctions of eternal rewards and puniſhments ſuch as would prove this revelation to be inconſiſtent and falſe, if they were really contained in it.

NOTHING can be more repugnant to the ſpirit of chriſtianity than violence, perſecution, and tyranny. Meekneſs, and humility, forgiveneſs of injuries, and benevolence exalted into charity are the great characteriſtics of this religion. They are ſo eſſential to it that many have deemed it on this account a fit profeſſion for ſome private ſect, but a rule impracticable in the great political ſocieties of mankind, and in the government of them*. That the clergy deemed it to be ſo very early, and has acted on this principle ever ſince, is evident to thoſe who know any thing of the eccleſiaſtical hiſtory. The firſt miſſionaries of the goſpel were ſent forth to preach, to per-

* When chriſtians became numerous the names of eminent biſhops alone were recited out of the diptychs; but when they were few, all that died in the communion of the church were commemorated in this manner. The dyptichs were regiſters originally of the ſubjects of CHRIST, who were to be hereafter citizens of the new Jeruſalem typified by the church on earth. Excommunication out of one, therefore, excluded out of the other. Hence the expreſſion, that names were written in heaven, and in the book of life, or that mens names were caſt out.

ſuade,

ſuade, to convert, and baptiſe. If they did not ſucceed, they had no power to call down fire from heaven, they were to ſhake off the duſt of their feet, and to depart quietly. Their commiſſion extended no further. If they did ſucceed, they eſtabliſhed a church in the place under certain orders and regulations of diſcipline, which ſeemed to be a neceſſary conſequence of their original, and ſolely authentic commiſſion, tho' not expreſly contained in it. Among theſe regulations, that of ſeparating from the congregations, and communion of chriſtians, and of delivering over to ſatan, unleſs they repented and ſatisfied the church, ſuch as were guilty of notorious crimes, and ſuch as preſumed to teach in thoſe congregations a contrary doctrine, was made by common conſent. I ſay it was made, becauſe it is plain it was executed, by common conſent.

But this power became ſoon confined, in the exerciſe, to a few perſons, and extended little by little, in the application of it, to a multitude of caſes neither intended, nor thought of in the firſt inſtitution. Perſons were appointed by the collective body of chriſtians in every church, that is by every church, to perform the duties which the apoſtles, that founded theſe churches, and the firſt paſtors of them however appointed, whether by the apoſtles, or by the churches, performed. The perſons thus appointed did not ceaſe to be members of the ſame religious ſociety, for the whole congregation of chriſtians was properly ſuch, any more than perſons appointed to military or civil employments ceaſe to be members of the ſame political ſociety. But the ſolemn air with which theſe ſpiritual magiſtrates were admitted into their offices by ordination and conſecration, if theſe ceremonies are to be diſtinguiſhed in honor of epiſcopacy, gave them a pretence to aſſume, and pre-

prepared others to believe that there was, beſides the human appointment, ſomething divine in their inſtitution; that they received the holy Ghoſt by impoſition of hands, and could tranſmit the ſame gift to others by the ſame ceremony. Thus they came to be eſteemed not only a diſtinct order, as the prieſts, the ſoldiers, and the huſbandmen were in the kingdom of Ægypt, but a diſtinct and independent ſociety too in many reſpects. This I mean. After CONSTANTINE had eſtabliſhed chriſtianity in the empire, the clergy were regarded as a ſuperior order in the ſtate whenever it was moſt advantageous for them to be reputed ſuch; and as a diſtinct ſociety in it whenever they thought fit, under the name of the church, to exerciſe powers, and to claim and procure to their order the enjoyment of immunities, or privileges, which they could neither claim, nor have any pretence to enjoy under the firſt character, and as members of the ſame ſtate. From hence aroſe a double abſurdity. It was abſurd, for it implied contradiction, that the ſame order of men ſhould be, and ſhould not be at once a member of the ſame commonwealth. It was abſurd, for it was repugnant to all the ideas of order to ſuffer what is commonly called imperium in imperio, to ſuffer a ſecond ſupreme legiſlative power to grow up where a firſt was already eſtabliſhed; and ſuch a power eſpecially as claimed a ſuperior original, and an independent exerciſe: from which claims it was eaſy to foreſee what happened ſoon, that the two powers would claſh, that a conflict of juriſdictions would ariſe, and that the eccleſiaſtical might prevail over the civil.

THE principal and moſt effectual weapon, which the clergy employed to make men ſubmit to this tyranny, was the chimerical weapon of excommunication, forged in the chimerical

fire of hell. They employed it firſt in their ſpiritual wars, for the ſtate of chriſtianity has been a ſtate of war from the beginning. In theſe they excommunicated, and damned one another, till ignorance, ſuperſtition, and bigotry realizing chimeras, theſe ſpiritual wars became very carnal. The clergy railed, and the laity cut throats. Eccleſiaſtical quarrels diſturbed the peace of the latter empire as much, and cauſed the effuſion of as much blood, as the invaſions of barbarous nations. But things grew worſe as the church grew ſtronger, and the ſcene became more diſorderly, and more bloody too, after CHARLES the great, when the weſtern church was reduced into a monarchy, and the biſhop of Rome became the monarch. In this elevation, with the whole body of the clergy more united, and better diſciplined under him, his own ambition increaſed, and he animated and guided theirs. They had made themſelves before this time a diſtinct ſociety from the civil in every country where they had been admitted. His authority over them had been very great, if it had not been intire in every country. He abetted them in their uſurpations, and they in return abetted his. But in this age the clergy ſecular and regular compoſed not only a diſtinct eccleſiaſtical ſociety in every particular ſtate, they coalited into one political body, whereof the pope was the head all over the weſt. The contention for ſuperiority over the civil powers was avowed; and whilſt theſe defended themſelves ſeparately, or, which was worſe, whilſt they aſſiſted the common enemy againſt one another, they were all ſubdued alike. Some of the greateſt emperors were excommunicated, and in conſequence inſulted, oppreſſed, dethroned. The eccleſiaſtical order, and, at the inſtigation of this, all the other orders in their dominions revolted againſt them. They diſcovered as well as other princes and ſtates, but they all diſcovered it too late, how dangerous

it is to protect, enrich, fortify, or even to ſuffer any order of men, who, having a diſtinct intereſt, and owing a diſtinct allegiance, muſt of courſe become a diſtinct ſociety in the ſtate; and eſpecially when this order has the means of turning the conſciences, and enflaming the paſſions of men by religion againſt the ſtate, and the legal government of it. GREGORY the ſeventh carried theſe uſurpations and this tyranny to the utmoſt height, by a more impudent, as well as a more ſucceſsful proſtitution of the doctrine of a future ſtate, than any of his predeceſſors. From him his ſucceſſors learned to diſtribute plenary indulgences with profuſion, and to extend particular excommunications into general interdicts. By the firſt, they ſold heaven to the beſt bidders, and ſent men in ſhoals to eternal happineſs. By the ſecond, they condemned whole nations at once, deprived them of the means of ſalvation, and ſubjected them in one collective body to eternal miſery. The firſt was a never-failing ſource of wealth, the ſecond of power. No inſtance can be produced in all theſe proceedings of any regard to true religion. Virtue and vice were out of the caſe. Even the opera operata of external devotion were enjoined for the ſake of form alone. To be truly orthodox, and in a ſtate of ſalvation, it was ſufficient to ſubmit blindly to the authority of the church, and to procure the advancement of it againſt law, reaſon, and every moral obligation. To be heretical, and in a ſtate of damnation, it was ſufficient to refuſe the ſubmiſſion, or to reſiſt the uſurpation. This abuſe of the doctrine of a future ſtate grew ſo common in a ſhort time, that it was employed not only in the great ſtruggles, which aroſe between the eccleſiaſtical and civil powers, but in every paultry affair wherein the popes had any perſonal, or family concern; and indulgences and excommunications were let looſe by this mitered

tyrant to ſate the ambition, or avarice of a brother, a ſiſter, a nephew, a niece, a whore, or a baſtard.

LXXXI.

IT is true that this exorbitancy has been reſtrained within two centuries; and this reſtraint is due to the reformation. We ſhook off the tyrant and his tyranny at once. You have filed the fangs, and blunted the teeth of the beaſt. He may mumble and bruiſe, he cannot tear, and bite, and devour as he did. But ſtill the inſtances that have been cited are proper, and the reflections that have been made juſt. The inſtances are proper, becauſe they are inſtances of the uſe that was made of this doctrine in the whole chriſtian church during ſeveral centuries. The reflections are juſt, becauſe tho' the ſame uſe is not made of it now, even in your communion, that was made formerly, yet the ſame moral arguments are employed to maintain it; arguments, which cannot be reconciled, as it ſeems to my apprehenſion, to the belief of an all-perfect Being.

To demonſtrate the exiſtence of ſuch a being by appeals to the inward conſciouſneſs of their own exiſtence, to the ſenſes, and to the reaſon of men, is not a difficult taſk. But he who has ſucceeded in it, runs the riſque of undoing what he has done, when he appeals at once to the ſenſes and to the paſſions, of men for the injuſtice of God's diſpenſations here; and to their reaſon alone prejudiced by the former, for the juſtice of his diſpenſations hereafter, tho' the actuality of theſe muſt be always hypothetical, and the equity of them not ſo much as problematical. The divines of our communion run

this riſque even more than yours, becauſe when they preſume to reaſon they have not the ſame reſerve of church authority, which yours have, to ſtop the mouths of gainſayers. They put the truth, or rather the belief of GOD's exiſtence, in all they preach, and all they write, on the caſt of a dye. They may confirm their hearers, and their readers in the doctrine they teach, but they may ſhake too the fundamental principle of all religion. Nay, they may drive into abſolute atheiſm the man who is weak enough to be moved by one part of what they ſay, and not weak enough to be convinced by the other. No matter. They not only repeat the moral arguments, and the bold aſſertions that have been mentioned already, but they tell us ſometimes, that the rules of evangelical perfection, ſuch as ſelf-denial, mortification, and others, are of ſo exalted a kind, that GOD gave the hope of future rewards to encourage us to the practice of them*. According to this doctrine then he is ſo cruel a being, that he will make none happy hereafter who have not made themſelves miſerable here. The man who will be ſaved muſt be initiated into the fanatical auſterities of ſome religious order to make his ſalvation ſure, for aught I can ſee; and when he is ſo, he may have good reaſon perhaps to renew the queſtion DIOGENES aſked, "num PATRÆCIONI "furi, quod initiatus fuerit, ſors erit melior poſt mortem, quam "EPAMINONDÆ?" They tell us ſometimes, that the temporal promiſes made to an holy and virtuous life extend no further than to food, and rayment, and to daily bread; and they demand, who would be contented with ſuch a ſcanty proviſion, when he ſees the greater proſperity of bad men who diſſolve in eaſe and luxury†? The proper anſwer to this queſtion is to be made ad hominem, by aſking another.

* ATTERBURY. † SHERLOCK, not the righteous biſhop, but his father.

Who would not be contented with this ſcanty proviſion here on the ſame terms, and why are not you, why do you, good man, repine at the greater proſperity of the wicked, when you know that eternal happineſs is laid up in ſtore for you, and eternal miſery for them, who will want even a drop of water to cool their tongues in the next world, after diſſolving in luxury here? They tell us ſometimes, that without the hopes of another life virtue is but a dead and empty name*. Nay, there are thoſe who have not ſcrupled to aſſert, that if there is not another world, all difference between good and bad is taken away in this world †. To ſteal, to poiſon, to ſtab, to forſwear, in ſhort, to commit any action that brings either profit, or pleaſure, is reaſonable: it is ſo far from being a crime, that it becomes a duty, in as much as it promotes the happineſs, that is, the chief end of the man who commits it. The two firſt of theſe doctrines are the very quinteſſence of theological abſurdity, the two laſt are abhorrent from all the principles of natural religion, and none of them come up to the purpoſe for which they are advanced. If there is no other life, virtue is but a dead and empty name, they ſay; and yet the infinite wiſdom of the Creator has conſtituted the ſtate of mankind, and the order of things in this world ſo, that human happineſs riſes and falls, is acquired or loſt in proportion to the practice or neglect of virtue. Crimes are reaſonable, vice becomes a duty on the ſame ſuppoſition that there is no future ſtate, they ſay; and yet vice is as oppoſite to virtue in it's effects, as in it's nature, according to the ſame conſtitution, and the ſame order of things. Neither the immortality of the ſoul, nor future rewards and puniſhments, can be demonſtrated on princi-

* Tillotson. † Wilkins, cum aliis.

ples of treaſon, notwithſtanding all the metaphyſical, theological, and even geometrical attempts that have been made, with the ſame evidence as all our moral obligations may be. The religion of nature, therefore, teaches the latter independently of the former. There may be rewards and puniſhments reſerved to another life; but whether there are, or are not, the religion of nature teaches, that morality is our greateſt intereſt, becauſe it tends to the greateſt happineſs of our whole kind in this life, and our greateſt duty, becauſe it is made ſuch by the will of that Supreme Being who created us, and the ſyſtem to which we belong. It is falſe, therefore, and impious to aſſert, as theſe divines do, that, if there is no other life, there are no moral obligations; or, as PASCHAL does, that if there were no other life, the directions of reaſon for our conduct in this world would not be ſuch as they are.

BUT to have done with ſuch abſurdities for good and all. I cannot cloſe theſe minutes better, than by obſerving how wide a difference there is between natural and artificial religion. It has been obſerved*, that the difference between the things of nature and thoſe of art appears to our great ſurpriſe, ſince microſcopes have been in uſe: and this ſurpriſe increaſes in proportion as they are improved. The things of nature appear to be adapted to uſeful purpoſes, wherever theſe purpoſes can be diſcerned; they are elegant, they are finiſhed, and the mind is raviſhed into admiration. The things of art are adapted often to purpoſes that are hurtful, and to whatever purpoſes they are adapted, when we ſee them ſuch as they really are, they appear to be clumſy,

* By Biſh. WILKINS in his treatiſe on nat. rel.

bungling,

bungling, coarſe, and imperfect inſtruments. A juſt and eaſy application of this remark might be made to things intellectual, and eſpecially to thoſe of a theological kind, and to the reaſonings of men about them. Thus, to take an inſtance of the higheſt and moſt important object of human ſpeculation, let us reflect once more on the notions that philoſophers and divines have entertained and propagated concerning the Deity: for theſe are the fountains of all religions; and as they are pure, or impure, ſo muſt the ſtreams that flow from them be. Right reaſon neither ſtops too ſhort, nor goes too far in attempts to frame ſuch notions as theſe. She frames them in that light which comes reflected from the works of God, and in which alone we may ſay that he ſhews himſelf to man. Imagination, on the contrary, knows no bounds, but proceeds from one hypothetical reaſoning to another, till ſhe has framed all thoſe notions of the Deity, which the prepoſſeſſions, the habits, the profeſſions, and the intereſts of the men, who give her this looſe, require. The conſequence has been, and it could be no other, that natural religion repreſents an all-perfect Being to our adoration, and to our love; and the precept, "thou ſhalt love the Lord "thy God with all thy heart," will be effectual in this ſyſtem. In the other, in that of artificial theology, I apprehend that it cannot be ſo; for I have learned from doctor BARROW*, that in the frame of the human ſoul "the per-"ceptive part doth always go before the appetitive; that "affection follows opinion; and that no object otherwiſe "moves our deſire than as repreſented by reaſon, or by "fancy, good unto us. This," he ſays, "is our natural "way of acting; and, according to it, that we may in due

* Ser. XXIII.

"meaſure

" meaſure love GOD, he muſt appear proportionably amiable " and deſirable to us. He muſt appear to be the fountain " of all good, the ſole author of all the happineſs we can " hope for." Can any man now preſume to ſay, that the GOD of MOSES, or the GOD of PAUL, is this amiable Being? The GOD of the firſt is partial, unjuſt, and cruel; delights in blood, commands aſſaſſinations, maſſacres, and even exterminations of people. The GOD of the ſecond elects ſome of his creatures to ſalvation, and predeſtinates others to damnation, even in the womb of their mothers. This precept of the goſpel, therefore, cannot refer to ſuch a GOD as either of theſe: and indeed, if there was not a Being infinitely more perfect than theſe: there would be no GOD at all, nor any true religion in the world. But there is moſt aſſuredly ſuch a Being; and he who propoſes any ſyſtem of religion, wherein this all-perfect Being is not to be found, may ſay that he is no atheiſt, but cannot ſay with truth that he is a theiſt.

FINIS.